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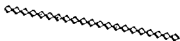
—New York TIMES

Before they were twenty, Whit Livingston and Melissa Butler knew that they wanted each other. But there was no place for them in the snug, settled Connecticut village. So they set off, together and alone, to build a new life in the raw young Hampshire Grants.

As you read this great American historical novel, we think you will agree with the more than half million readers who have called this one of the finest books they ever read.

"... a robust freshness, an understanding of primitive courage and simplicity, a sense of the free and lovely wilderness ..."

—YALE



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BANTAM BOOKS · New York

to the Mountain

LeGRAND CANNON, Jr.

CONTENTS



PART ONE

The Fields ❧ *1769*

1 IT WAS a hot, dry-feeling day early in August in the year 1769. Kettleford, in New Hampshire Province, was haying. Throughout the whole township—on the west bank of Merrimack below Amoskeag Falls and twenty miles north of the Bay Province line—there was nothing but haying. Politics, fishing, linen and flax, woodcutting, potatoes, the reaping of rye, speculating in land, the Presbyterian church, those things were forgotten, or at least put aside.

There wasn't much doing in politics anyway Young Governor Wentworth—old Uncle Benning's nephew and successor—had been two years in the chair, and was doing well at it. John was as honest as his uncle was not. Kettleford liked him—whenever they thought of him.

Three weeks ago, the Kettleford men had finished their fishing up at the falls, and they'd made a fair catch of it. They'd taken more fish—salmon and shad—than the Indians ever did back in the old days Three hundred pounds for a man in a night would go a long way toward paying expenses of setting a weir and tying a net, finding the rum, and mending the spears, buying the salt, all the various things that a man had to reckon.

The making of linen wouldn't come until later, and the flax wasn't pressing. Winter rye wasn't ready—though soon it would be—and no one would think of cutting wood in the summer. Digging potatoes and pressing out cider belonged to the autumn; churchgoing to Sabbath and maybe to Lecture Day; everything in its season. Right now it was haying.

Kettleford fields were pleasant to mow in. That is, some of them were, and they were pleasanter now than they had been. Thirty years had got rid of the stumps, and even in the western

hour high—and it now lacked by two hours to noon. The ...ter in the pocket of Thett's right thumb had broken, and ...e was a notable pain in his left shoulder muscle. But he was swinging—not so smart as he had been, perhaps, but all the ...e keeping the heel of his scythe well down and avoiding ...n rocks as he could see.

...hett was working for Lawrence Murphy, the tailor, against a ... surtout that Murphy would fashion him in the fall. It was ...al of comfort to Thett to know that this winter he'd have a ...

Down in a remote corner of the Governor lot, Mr. Gavin ...wan, the minister, was somberly cutting a little hay for him... Mr. Gowan's contract with Kettleford provided for hay, but ... Gowan had learned that a cow can't eat contracts. A good ...nd to mow, Mr. Gowan was, too. He was still on his third gill ...rum, and he'd cut close on to three cocks since breakfast

Even old David Gillmor was haying, but he couldn't mow or ...ch this year; he was pulling a loafer rake. He was about the ...nest this summer that he'd ever been. Twelve years ago, David ...d made the mistake of wearing his waistcoat as he'd come out ... Fort William and Henry in the surrender. It was a lovely gar...nt made out of loonnecks—and the first Indian who saw it ...d sought to hamstring David so as to get it. But David was ...rt in the legs, and the blow had landed too high. Fleeing into ...e brush, David had not only kept his waistcoat but had carried ...ng the tomahawk also, stuck in his backside. Lately, the ...ound had been full of pain, even in weather like this. But ...avid still managed to hitch himself along somehow, and in the ...urse of a day he'd rake his share of hay.

In the big handsome meadow that lay close to the river on ...idow Katt's place, there were five men—all haying, all single ...en, two of them widowers. Nobody knew, yet, just how it was ...ing to come out.

William Cauldwell, the cordwainer, had Ensign Lord working ...ith him. Cauldwell had made Ensign a pair of pumps back in ...ebruary. Tonight they'd be square. Lord was finding the rum

for the haying, as against the sole leather Cauldwell had fou
for the pumps. It had been pretty poor leather, so Ensign h
thought, and Cauldwell was now thinking the same of the n

Down back of Porter's place, Zebulon Porter was pitching
his wife, who was up on top making the load. She could mak
load right, too—starting at the outside and then working in
and not lose hardly a wisp, except what was snatched off b
branch, maybe, between there and the barn. If she'd been stro
enough to pitch off when they got to the barn, it would h
been better yet. It was hard for Zeb to pitch off a load he had
made because he didn't know in what order each fork had be
laid. They were doing all right, though, they'd hauled two
already and would get in a third before dinner.

Joe Felipe hadn't had a fire in his forge since Saturday night
he'd be done with his haying some time this forenoon. Joe h
hayed Sunday. He was a Portygee, and they knew he was Pop
But still he'd been allowed to remain when he first came to t
and now they were used to him. About a year and a half ago
had showed up at Butler's tavern one morning in January a
traveling all night on the crust. It was just after Captain Ka
died and the town was without any smith. Joe said that he was
worker in iron—which he had been at one time. He bid in t
smithy when they held the vendue, and paid for it in gold. H
had then moved the smithy, setting it up near the center of tow
just down the road from the new meetinghouse, and not too f
from the tavern. He turned out to be a fair smith when sober a
a good one when drunk. But he wasn't as good as old Karr h
been, and nobody made out to Joe that he was. He was a squ
bull of a man, dark-complected—as anyone might be, but as n
many in Kettleford were—and he wore his black hair tied wi
a scarlet hair ribbon. He had little small ears that set tight to h
head and made his neck look all the bigger. And he wore a kn
like a sailor.

The reason the town didn't take to him better, Joe laid
Whit Livingston. It was Whit who kept the talk going abo
what a smith Karr had been—a far better smith than this Port

ee Joe ever had been or would be. If it hadn't been for that kind of talk, Joe had an idea, they might forget his dark complexion even in winter and about his being Popish, as well Joe couldn't see that these things were important. He hadn't a drop of black blood in his veins, and if his being born Popish wasn't important to him, Joe couldn't see why it should be to anyone else. He hated Whit Livingston.

This young Whit Livingston was the best hand to mow that there was in Kettleford. Aside from that, he was a joke. When Whit had been twelve years old—right on his birthday—his father, Tom Livingston, had treated the boy at the tavern—and Whit hadn't been able to drink it. Rum was new to Whit then, because old Tom had never seen fit to spare the boy any. It had stuck in Whit's throat. It was a comical thing for the men standing round, but it was all the more funny because old Tom himself was such a great drinking man. The joke was on Tom, and all of them laughed at it. Tom hadn't taken it kindly. He figured the boy was making game of him, too. So Tom stood his son up in the middle of the room and yanked the shirt off the boy's back. Then Tom laid it on him with the piece of rope that until then had held up the boy's pants. After a time, some of the men—although they hadn't yet finished laughing—had made Tom give over. The boy was still on his feet, to be sure, but Captain's daughter was there—Captain Eliphalet Butler, kept the tavern—and though she was only a little thing then, ten years old or so, maybe, still her being there didn't make it seem right.

Whit never did learn to drink rum. And it was a year or two after that before he'd go to the tavern when he was sent on an errand. He didn't seem to like to go about amongst people at all. He thought they were still laughing about what they remembered—and as often as not, probably, he was correct.

Old Captain Karr, though, had taken a liking to Whit. Whit would go over and hang round the smithy—more particularly times when there weren't any other boys there—and sometimes the captain would give him a task to do.

When Whit was sixteen and ready for it, Karr had told Whit

This morning, Whit was mowing in the sparse and dry grass that his father's fields always ran to. Besides Whit, there were three men: old Tom and Whit's half brother, who was younger than Whit was, and Whit's uncle, Rob Murdough. Rob had brought with him a pair of young oxen, yoked into a rick he had managed to borrow, and between Whit and the oxen they were getting in hay. In return for the oxen, old Tom had agreed to send Whit to his uncle for four days next week—two days for each ox. Old Tom, as usual, had got the worst of the bargain.

Even in grass like this, thin and hard and the whole field sprinkled with rocks, Whit could mow clean and he could mow fast. He might not look to be fast, but that was because he mowed easy and gentle and the speed didn't show. He used a straight snath made out of white ash that had just the least little white of a whip to it, and a piece of black oilstone for a rifle. The stone had been given him by a White Hills man he'd met trapping. The man said there was a lot of it in a place west of Great Ossipy Pond. It was a stone to put a nice edge on a blade—not wired, but sweet. Whit was having a pretty good time.

Old Tom stopped midway of a swath, wiped the sweat out of his eyes, dropped his scythe to the ground, and walked back to the keg. Other men used a jug mostly for haying, but not old Tom Livingston. When he hayed, he hayed right. There was a ten-gallon keg, all complete with a spigot, set under a beech tree and a gourd lying beside it.

Tom was tired—and looked it. He was a stringy kind of man, and when he was tired, he drooped. He looked like his farm.

Down on one knee, he picked up the gourd, held it under the spigot, and then turned the handle. Nothing happened. He tipped the keg forward slowly . . . and it seemed to take him a long time before he'd tipped it all the way forward—and the truth had come out. That was all that came out.

Tom stared at the keg for a while, and then he sat back and wondered if he was going to cry—but he found he'd been sweating so much that he was more sober than he'd thought he was. He tried to think what to do. They were clean out of rum at the

house, and Rob wouldn't lend. Neither would anyone else. He guessed he'd have to send Whit to the tavern. If he sent Whit Whit would come back

It was four miles to Butler's and while Whit was gone, they could all spell themselves.

The other boy came over for a drink, and Tom let him find out for himself what had happened. The boy cursed for a while and then Tom said, 'Go get Whit.' The boy stood there and bawled for Whit. Whit finished his swath, and then he came over.

"This here's dry,' said Tom, touching the keg with his foot. "You go to Butler's and fetch some"

Whit knew about how much they'd work while he was gone.

"You ain't got to take the keg with you." His father's voice rose. "Get a yoke from the house and a couple of jugs. And get a move onto you! I'm too dry to wait long."

Whit was trying to figure if there wasn't some other way out of it. They hadn't any more than got started, and now Rob and the oxen would be going to waste all the time he was gone.

His father roared at him. "It ain't going t' kill you to go fetch some rum, is it?"

"No, I don't know as it is"

"Then fetch it!—and don't stand there like a sick sheep thinkin' about it. Just because you're a unnatural freak ain't no sign that the rest of us want t' hay dry."

Whit hung his scythe on the highest branch he could reach.

"Leave that thing where I c'n git at it," his father said. "I got a gap in mine."

"Then you'll have t' grind it."

"You do as I tell you!"

Whit turned slowly round to him. He spoke straight into his father's face: "You touch that scythe, and I'll cut your throat with it." Then he bent down to pick up the keg.

Old Tom didn't say a word, and no more did the other two.

Whit took the loose bung out of the bunghole and put it in his shirt. Then he swung the keg up to his shoulder and started off across the field—not toward the house, toward the tavern.

His uncle called after him, speaking as gently as he could: "What about the yoke, Whit?"

"I ain't only bringin' one keg."

Rob leaned on a tree. "He'll have quite a lug," he remarked, "'fore he gets back."

Old Tom said, "God," and lay down.

The other boy went down to the house to fetch up some cider.

2

CAPTAIN ELIPHALET BUTLER, taverner, storekeeper and Captain of the Train Band, had been putting in a bad morning. A dozen times he'd stepped out into the yard to look at the weather, and each time he'd shaken his bald little head because the weather was fine. Captain's small meadow was ready to cut—and he could get no man to work in it.

Captain had to have hay. He didn't own any oxen, but he did have three cows, and now and again he'd furnish hay to a teamster or to a traveler on horseback. There weren't many travelers. Captain Butler's small tavern was mainly a local affair: rum and provisions, gunpowder, nails . . . Bed and board were available but were not often called for. Merrimack River was no longer the highway that it had been for Indians. The men using it now as a route north and south were trappers and hunters, and only occasionally settlers. Connecticut River carried the settlers. As for east and west traffic, there wasn't much anyway. There was a road to Portsmouth from Kettleford, and it ran past the tavern and on down to the river. But it brought little custom to Captain. A week on that road would shorten the life of a pair of oxen a year. In between towns it was full of brush and down trees, mudholes and boulders, and big hollow stumps. Any traveler who'd come over that road deserved to put up at an inn that was better than Captain's. There was an inn to the east of him the other side of the river, and there was one a few miles to the west in New Boston. That left Captain Butler to make what money he

could out of Kettleford people—a course to which he applie himself with more greed than hard work.

Coming in from the yard now, he leaned on his counter, h chin in his hands, and wondered what he could do. The thin that graveled him most was that he was the town's bigge creditor—and yet he couldn't collect. If he were to try to for payment in labor from a man who could vote, they'd vote i somebody else to keep tavern Same way with the men who we in the Train Band they elected him Captain Training Day, h had his headquarters here at the tavern, and even after deducti for enough treats to assure his election, he still made mo money on Training Day than he did any other day in the ye He couldn't risk losing that.

In resentful despair, he mixed himself a small brandy a water, and stood musing in front of the open shutters at one e of the room From there, looking past a corner of the stable an · springhouse beyond, he could see away down in the distanc one end of his meadow—with the breeze shifting the colors o the grass and the whole thing a fine picture of summer. But Cap tain saw nothing of beauty—only possible waste.

Something moved on the far side of the meadow—and th quick little eyes at the window made out a man come forth fro the woods—a man carrying a load on his shoulder. Swiftly th figure came along the edge of the field—not running, not wal ing. Captain knew every gait in town: that was Whit Livingsto . . . bringing a ten-gallon keg to be filled.

Captain's daughter came out of the springhouse to set one o her milk pans out in the sun. And she looked toward the meado —and her hands flew to her hair. Then she smoothed out he apron. She gazed at the meadow—and then she darted back int the springhouse again.

Captain stood with his mouth hung open . . . and turned awa from the window, shaking his head. His mouth shut, and h smiled. Whit Livingston, eh? Well, there couldn't be anyon safer!

Four years ago, being newly a widower, Captain had carefull

reckoned that a daughter cost less than a wife, and had decided he wouldn't remarry. Since that time, Melissa had done as much work as a woman. It had agreed with her, though; she was rugged enough, even though she was small. But lately Captain had worried: he was afraid he might lose her. He could not see her beauty, but he did know that a girl who could do as much work as Melissa, and whose father was supposed to have money, couldn't fail of some suitors.

Melissa'd had them, all right. She could have married well at fourteen or at any time after that. It had been her own deciding —so she had supposed—that had kept her from marrying.

Captain knew better. Men are not at their best round a tavern —and he had seen to it that she wasn't spared very much. Melissa had witnessed more than one brawl—and with bucket and mop had set the place to rights afterward. Fighting, a good many times, followed singing. She had used to like ballads—but not any more. A gouged eye made her sicken. She had learnt, too, how to wrench free when they seized her Melissa didn't much want to get married. She'd seen too many men in the morning, lying face down on the midden who'd been flung out there to sleep where it was warm

But in those ways Whit Livingston was not like the others.

Captain—although he could see that—wasn't the least bit disturbed. Whit was next thing to a pauper. Melissa'd get over it promptly. After all, she was his daughter.

Melissa came in from the springhouse, and her father greeted her testily. "Where you been all this time?"

"Churnin'," she said.

"Settin' in the cool of the springhouse, more like it."

Melissa thought he looked sickly. "What's the matter with you, pa? You look out o' case."

"Hay."

"Your hay's good!" she exclaimed.

"'Tain't no good if 'tain't cut."

"You c'n git a crew to come mow it."

"Crew!" said Captain. "Can't get a man!" He explained his position.

Melissa said, "Joe Felipe don't belong to the Train Band. Maybe you could get him."

"I owe him!" said Captain. "Shut the eye of an ax a month ago for me, 'n two weeks ago he fixed a beal on the pot."

They were both silent—both thinking of Whit. When his knock came at the door, only Captain looked up.

Whit stood motionless in the doorway waiting for his eyes to get used to the dimness.

Melissa thought he was lovely.

In point of fact, he was clean, having washed himself in the brook the other side of the meadow—and his hair was neatly drawn back and secured. His clothes were the same as most men's: a loose gray linen shirt and a pair of breeches—Whit's ere leather—that came just below his knees. He was carrying keg with two fingers hooked into the bunghole.

"You ain't goin' t' lug that home *full*, are you?" Captain said hopefully.

Whit nodded.

"Set it there under the cask, then Melissa, you draw."

Melissa got down the funnel, and Captain watched Whit.

With the keg slowly filling, Melissa turned her head and looked up. "Hayin'?"

Whit opened his mouth to answer, closed it, and nodded his head.

Whit, Captain concluded, was worse off than Melissa.

"Wish't I could get mine cut," Captain remarked.

"Looks prime," agreed Whit. "I come up through t' meadow."

"You're about done down to your place, I expect."

"Ain't hardly got started."

"Mowin' hadn't ought to take long. They tell me you're quite a hand."

"I got a good blade." It was always his answer.

"So I hear. Karr's, ain't it?"

"Yes."

"He was an awful good smith," Melissa put in.

"You're drawin' rum," her father reminded her. "How many is workin' down to your place now, Whit?"

"There's three there besides me, and my uncle Rob's oxen."

"You got a crew."

Whit thought of them as he knew they were now, lying under the beech tree.

Melissa rolled the keg gently to see how it was coming. "This here's going t' be wonderful heavy," she said.

Whit managed better this time. "I c'n lug it, I guess."

"There ain't many would want to."

"'Tain't a great ways."

"Four mile," said Melissa.

Captain judged the keg nearly full "Whit," he demanded, "whyn't you take a day 'n come and cut mine for me?"

"Well—"

"I could rake," said Melissa.

Captain was proud of himself. It was what he had hoped for. He figured his field was as good as mowed now

But Captain had counted his chickens a little soon.

Just himself and Melissa? Whit thought. All day alone in a field? It was so much more than he'd hoped for, that now he drew back. "Got to get our'n in first," he told Captain.

Melissa banged shut the spigot She stood up and faced Whit. "Go git it in, then," she said. "We'll git a man to cut our'n."

Whit could say nothing He felt his face flush—and at that moment Joe Felipe ambled in

Captain greeted him

Joe answered politely—and looked at the other two.

"We were talkin' 'bout hay," Captain explained.

Joe wondered what Whit could have said about hay to make Melissa look that way. The two or three times Joe had tried for Melissa, he'd not succeeded in so much as making her angry. Melissa had laughed at him. (It had sounded to her as though he called her "militia.") Envy rose up in Joe, and he hated Whit more than ever.

"Your'n in, Joe?" said Captain.

"My hay?" Reluctantly Joe turned to Captain. "I finish this morning."

"You done well. Have some brandy"

"Treat?" Joe inquired, scarcely believing.

"Treat," Captain assured him "First man in the town t' get his hay in. Girl, set out t' brandy!"

Melissa, with a flourish, set out the stone bottle. She gave J a smile, but Whit failed to see it; he was down on one knee, with fumbling fingers trying to fit the bung into his keg.

Joe poured himself brandy in a quantity that suited his talent and the fact that the brandy was free—eying Melissa while he was drinking it. He set the heavy glass down on the counter "T'at's a' right!" he exclaimed.

Whit began to rap with the bungstarter.

"Joe," *proposed Captain loudly*, "you're done up to your place you mow for me the rest of the day, 'n you c'n have that brandy to mow on—what's left in the bottle"

Whit had left off his rapping.

"Mine now," Joe responded. "T' ax an' t' beal," he reminded *Captain.*

"I told Pa I'd rake," Melissa said coolly.

Joe's eyes went from one to the other—but he looked last at Whit. The boy was standing up, waiting. . . .

Joe turned back to Captain. "Done," he said—and he reached *for the bottle. "I take a roun' of it now."*

Whit came over and laid the bungstarter down on the counter. "That's a big meadow; you'll want two hands to mow that meadow."

Joe laughed aloud. "Too late, boy!" he said. "Here—" he held the bottle toward Whit—*"have a drink of t' brandy 'n t'en you* go home."

"You better drink it. It might be you'll need it."

"By God," Joe exclaimed happily, "maybe I will!"—he looked across to Melissa—"eh?" But she wouldn't promise.

Whit's not taking his eyes off of Joe *for an instant made Cap-*

tain uneasy. Moreover, Whit was cold sober—there was no telling what he might do. Captain slid his hand toward the bungstarter. It was a very good bungstarter, with a square, ironwood head and a short, slim, withy handle.

Joe finished his drink, and banged the glass on the counter "Go on home!" he told Whit "I hear a'ready too much of your mowing."

"I can mow," Whit acknowledged.

"You and your Karr blade! Look! T'ey send you t' tote rum. T'at's how good you can mow! You, t'ey better yoke in wit' t'oxen—where you belong!"

Captain had the bungstarter now and felt better

Melissa was perched up on one end of the counter. "Whit's a good hand to mow," she said.

"I got a good blade." Whit said it from habit.

"God damn your blade!" bellowed Joe, and whipped out his knife. He held the point of it, quivering, just under Whit's nose.

Whit stood his ground. He was scared, but stood quiet. Gently Captain moved into position.

There wasn't a sound from Melissa.

Joe's hand was trembling and so was his voice "I c'n cut me more hay wit' t'is here little knife 'n what you c'n cut wit' your Karr blade! You come 'n mow! I show you t' man who c'n mow: José Felipe!"

"That's fair," Whit agreed.

"And t' best one to mow, she take for him tomorrow. Si?"

Whit made no answer.

It was the girl's voice that came into the silence. She spoke low and even. "That's fair."

3

JOE, GOING back after his scythe, met a man on the road. The word spread pretty fast after that, and it didn't thin out in the spreading. Nathaniel Thett, for example, mowing along the wall, learned from a breathless youth that Whit and the Portygee

were at that moment fighting a duel with scythes in the meadow down back of the tavern. Thett informed Murphy, and set off at a run. Murphy followed more leisurely.

Mr. Gowan heard it that Whit, coming on Joe and the girl under a haycock, had grabbed up Joe's scythe and gone at him. Mr. Gowan didn't believe the whole of it, but still he thought he'd better go up there.

Down at Widow Karr's place, they understood the tavern was afire. They couldn't see any smoke, but they went all the same.

Those in Tom Livingston's field, being asleep, came as near to the truth as did any. Whit had arrived there with the keg about noontime. He hadn't waked anyone—he'd just left the keg, taken his scythe and his oilstone, and started back to the tavern. Later, when the men wakened, they concluded that Captain must have talked Whit into doing some mowing. They went to work on the keg.

Meantime, at the tavern, there was confusion and some disappointment. Joe had shrewdly bethought himself that, on the morrow, there might be more privacy down in the meadow if the whole town didn't know what was doing. Therefore, on his return from fetching his scythe, he'd denied his first story and had sworn to the earlier arrivals that what had occurred had been no more than high words between him and Whit over who had the best scythe blade. They would now mow it out.

Melissa, appealed to, had confirmed this, and so had Captain.

Some believed it; some didn't. No one was quite certain as to just how the girl did figure in it. But they were certain of one thing: they were here now, and they might as well make the best of it. A contest at mowing wasn't the same thing as a fire—and it wasn't a murder—but they'd been working hard haying and they had a mind now to make holiday. A mowing contest would serve . . . and they all started in drinking and swearing and wagering just as though they'd been gentlemen. They bet about even. Whit was the best hand to mow, but he'd likely be tuckered after lugging that keg home.

Mr. Gowan, the minister, drew apart from the crowd. Unless this thing were done properly, there'd be nothing but argument, and a fight to wind up with. He found a smooth place where the dirt was packed down, and fishing a nail out of his pocket, he squatted down on his haunches He drew a rough outline of Captain's hay field—as near as he could remember it It was a long narrow field and irregular enough so that there was no proper way to divide it in half—not without a compass and chain and take half a day to it . . . and even then the grass wasn't the same in all parts of the field. All right then: they'd have to mow round it. But that wouldn't work, either. The man on the inside would have too much advantage; his laps would be shorter. Gowan puzzled and puzzled . . . and finally he got it. He was greatly relieved. They'd mow the field lengthwise. Between swaths, they'd cross over. That made it come out right.

Whit had taken the same way back to the tavern—the short way through the woods. The scythe seemed a light thing to carry after the keg, but it was pesky where there were bushes. Still, he made pretty good time. As he came up through the meadow, he figured he'd been gone from the tavern less than two hours.

The men in the yard saw him come round the corner of the stable, traveling at an earnest, shuffling lope, and bearing his scythe like a banner When Whit saw them, he stopped. There were more than two score of them.

They gave him a cheer, with a good deal of laughter.

Whit stood stock-still, facing it out. Then he turned to go home—and he heard the roar at his back as they thought they were going to be cheated.

A man spoke close behind him and then laid hold on Whit's arm. The boy jerked free and swung round—to face Mr. Gowan. They looked at each other a moment, Mr. Gowan quiet and easy.

"Now, Whit," he said, "you stay and go through with it."

"No!"—and because it boiled up within him, Whit gave the reason: "All that they're after is something to laugh at."

"That's correct," Gowan answered. "And you quit now, and *they'll have it.*" *He let this sink in, and then asked,* "Can you wax him?"

The boy had calmed down some. "I got an awful good blade, sir."

"Are you spent?"

"I'm a little mite blowed, but I ain't anyways spent."

"That'll pass in a minute. We'll go down to the meadow." He turned round to the crowd. "How about it?—Joe ready?"

"He's ready!" they shouted. "Joe's *prime!*" Those that had bet on Joe had been getting him ready. Joe himself felt he could mow like a whirlwind. "José is a'ready!" he told Mr. Gowan.

The minister spoke to the crowd. "We shall adjourn to the meadow."

They gave a great shout and trooped away down the cart track, t the springhouse and stable, bound for the meadow. Some-e asked Whit if he'd had his dinner. Whit said, "No, come to think of it," and two or three heard him.

Strung out, they made quite a procession: the small boys on ahead, *then Joe and his backers, then two men who were carrying* thirty gallon of rum on a hand barrow, followed by Captain, fearfully watching the rum. Then some more men, and then Whit, walking alone, and last of all Mr. Gowan, stalking along in the rear, barefoot like the rest—just as he'd come from his haying—but having *authority. Some ways back of them all,* limped old David Gillmor. No one waited for David—but David would get there.

Melissa had stayed at the tavern.

They passed through a thicket of alder, crossed a small stream, and came up a rise into the meadow. The men *in the lead turned* round to see where to go now.

"Keep to the edge!" Captain begged them. "Don't trample *the hay! Go round to the side, there, under them* ash trees. That'll make a good place for this barrel."

Mr. Gowan called Ensign Lord back to him, and inquired, "You sober?"

in't very far from it."

ell, that's near enough probably. You stay about that way. need someone to help me."

d nodded. "I'll be here." He was disappointed a little, but same time he was flattered.

e barrel was rigged, and Captain, yielding to pressure, d a round. Ensign held off. But Joe took his with the rest of and then fell to work at whetting his blade He made her

ut, off to one side, was caressing his blade with the oilstone. de a soft, slipping sound.

. Gowan, looking over the meadow, found it to be about as d remembered it. He called for silence—and got something aching it; they seemed more than willing to have some-run things. He told them what he had decided, and a few stood it. "Joe," he said, "will lead in."

cheer stopped him. When a crew mowed, the best hand s was lead man. Joe's backers were cheering. When the had let up, Lawrence Murphy, the tailor and an old friend irt's—and who had bet on Whit Livingston, dinner or no r—called out clearly, "Why Joe?"

e claims he's the best hand," Mr. Gowan explained. "Until proves to the contrary, Joe's statement is good. Joe will n."

one argued.

peed's not the only thing," he further explained; "they have w clean. I shall be judge of that. Joe, you all whetted?"

e said, "What?" and half a dozen men shouted, "You all ed?"

e said proudly, "By God, she's a razor!—skin a mouse wit'

/hit?"

e boy nodded.

'ow, then, Joe, you'll strike in right here. You'll mow along dge—keeping well clear of the bushes—to the south end of eld, understand?"

"Oh, I un'erstan' a'right."

"Then you pick up your scythe and walk across to the side, and mow back along that."

"Sure!" said Joe "Sure! I un'erstan'."

"Then you pick up your scythe and walk over to *this* sid mow back to here"

"Sure, I mow round t' field, but I walk on t' ends."

"That's correct When you get back to here, you'll mo the field a swath, and do the same thing again."

"Sure, sure! You don' need t tell me I mowed before, m

"Whoever is leading," Mr Gowan explained to them "can mow as wide or as narrow as he's got a mind to. It's the other to match his swath to the lead man's I'll be ju that, too You can both whet as it pleases you, or stop fo thing else. If there's aught in your minds that I've not pr *for, speak of it now"*

The crowd murmured approval.

"*First man to finish,*" Mr Gowan said simply—"in the of the field and opposite here—is the best hand to mow stepped to one side "All right, Joe . . "

Joe spat on his hands and lightly hefted his scythe. It great heavy thing with a snath like a tree trunk.

"Strike in!" Gowan ordered.

Joe's eyes narrowed and his face changed. He was serio bent *to his right* and struck in—coming round with a long-armed stroke, and a hook onto the end of it. It was too—clean as a whistle! He could mow, all right. Joe was one.

The men watched in silence as Joe took his two steps fo and again the great swing. He was built right to mow, Jo short-legged, close to the ground—and those terrible ar him! He was cutting a wide swath, too—half a yard wide most men. Two steps and his third swing. Two steps mo

At the fifth stroke, Mr. Gowan said, "Whit—"

Whit bent and struck in. He'd had to move over some

ıand because of the width of Joe's swath, and now, when he 'thened his own swing to match Joe's, Whit found it awk-|. He began to lose ground. Joe reached the turn a good ten .es ahead of him.

'r. Gowan knew what the trouble was—and maybe some of ›thers. Whit, having to reach more than was natural at both of his stroke, was being pulled off his balance. It made him clumsy. But there was nothing Mr. Gowan could do.

›e kept on gaining all the way down the far side. He was a ı's length in the lead now. He walked very businesslike ss the end of the field, and began to mow toward them. They in cheering him as he came nearer.

was the first sound of approval that poor Joe had heard e he'd come to Kettleford He grinned with delight; he was ıng a fine time. He stopped to whet in the shade, had a swal-, moved in across Whit's swath, and was all set to strike in n before Whit was come up to them. Joe stood up straight, ıng easy, and called out to Whit, "Come on, boy! Get to vin'!"

'hey liked that and laughed loudly.

Whit didn't know what Joe had said and he just kept on ving. Noise was all he could hear; he didn't hear what they ›d to him. He got the tone of it, though: they were making game of him. Well, it wasn't the first time.

.s he moved in across the beginning of Joe's second swath, aw that his own swath was full wide enough. And as clean as 's, too. He struck in again without whetting . . . and before long, he had to repeat several strokes and was forced to ›t, then. Because he'd put it off, it took longer. By the time had an edge fit to mow with, Joe was so far in the distance t that hair ribbon of his didn't look any bigger than the red a blackbird. Whit fell to mowing again. The fresh edge was a p—but he was still awkward and clumsy.

He'd been trying to keep Melissa from coming into his mind. t that didn't work, either. He kept seeing her. And he heard voice, too. "That's fair." He heard the low and cool sound of

it. When he heard it, it made him mow furiously, like a
man, with no thought to saving his strength any.

They made a dozen full crossings that way—counting a
and a back-swath as a crossing—and Joe led now by h
length of the meadow.

Joe began to let-up some—he could afford to. Moreove
had a pain in his side. On top of that, Joe had taken to thi
Hearing them cheer him had done something to Joe: he w
more of it. Joe was thinking about after tomorrow. Mayb
was thinking, after tomorrow he'd best let the story get ro
he didn't do that, they'd think Captain had tricked him
mowing this meadow for nothing. For nothing, eh? José
chuckled. He was going to get paid! He was going to ge
for a lot of things Tomorrow—right over there under
pine trees! Once the town had heard that story, they'd te
long time. José Felipe would be quite a fellow!

Joe swung happily on with his mowing—in spite of the
in his side and some shortness of breath. They had half th
to go yet.

Whit, men were saying, wouldn't last out. He looked
bad. "I'll wager anyone," a man said, "Whit'll fall flat c
face 'fore another five crossings I'll bet two to one on it."

"Done," he was answered. "Pint to a gill. That's in Me
Me, now, I figure he'll fall over backward."

All up and down the line, they repeated that. That was a
one!

Mr. Gowan, stalking and watching, finally thought h
what he'd been looking for. Whit's swath seemed the wide
paced them off carefully . . . Whit's showed a foot wider

Mr. Gowan had made up his mind beforehand that, i
happened, he'd tell Whit only. That was proper—whic
man led fixed the width and the other man matched it.

He came up behind Whit and on his near side. "You're
ing too wide, Whit." The boy didn't hear him. Mr. Gowan
him again, but Whit still didn't hear him. So Gowan rea
out and put his hand on Whit's shoulder. The boy kept on m

Mr. Gowan took him by the two arms at the elbows—and t had to stop then. The boy swayed a little, and the older held him.

ack under the ash trees, they were puzzled. Then a man said, Gowan's showin' him mercy."

et him finish!" they shouted. "'Twon't hurt him none, Mr an. Let the boy finish!"

You listen to me, Whit. I'm Mr. Gowan."

Vhit nodded.

You're mowing too wide. Do you hear me? Cut down your ig some. You're about a foot wide. You hear me, now, do s"

Vhit nodded again. He'd heard it all right, but he had no im- e to answer. He tried to pull free, to go on with his mowing.

Let him mow!" the men shouted. They began to move for- d.

Hold still," Gowan said to Whit "Listen to me! When you down to the end there, you go douse your head in the brook. I you do that?"

Vhit croaked out something.

All right—" He released him.

he minister walked back toward the keg and the people. "He 't quit," he told them—and before they could answer: "I 't know but I'll have a drop Hot out there in the open."

Melissa, up at the tavern, had held out about as long as she ld now. From the window, she could see only the middle part the field—the part they'd not mowed yet. She couldn't tell v things were going.

On a sudden, Melissa slipped out the back door, round the far e of the stable, and then picked up the cart track to the adow. It was downhill and Melissa found herself running. She ed to run—just as a child does. Her yellow hair stood out be- id her.

hit nodded. "I'm goin'." He turned away then—although ew something was missing—and started back to his mow- Joe, he took note as he came out of the woods, had pretty the length of the field on him.

hit took down his scythe. "Mowing too wide," Mr. Gowan said. Well, that was easy fixed, certainly! He touched up dge with a stroke or two, hefted his scythe, and struck in. *felt like mowing!* Inside of ten strokes, he was humming, ing time with his mowing. Melissa was probably watching All right, let her watch—he'd show her some mowing! He good hand to mow, he knew that, it wasn't all in his blade. r. Gowan, standing then under the ash trees, moved over sign and touched him on the elbow. Ensign followed him. w steps from the crowd, Gowan said to Lord quietly, "Bet pounds, Bay old tenor, for me on Whit, will you? Get the odds you can on two pounds of it; the other pound, bet with tain. And remember: as far as they're concerned, it's you are wagering."

sign said, "Yes, sir." He had to bet even with Captain in r to get him to bet. On the other two pounds, he got three to At the same odds, he also wagered ten shillings on his own unt with Nathaniel Thett—although he doubted that Thett ld ever be able to pay it. He didn't try to go any further: the of them knew too much about mowing. Odds were no longer able. They were peering at Whit and beginning to wonder mutter . . . They'd be trying to copper their bets pretty soon. gn thought he was lucky: maybe, if Thett couldn't pay off oney, next winter he'd get Thett to teach him to read.

Vhen Whit and Joe were come near to each other—Whit g one way and Joe going the other—Joe said, "Where you n, for God's sake, boy? You been sleepin'?"

Dreamin', maybe," said Whit. "Joe, you look to me kinda wed. Ain't that scythe a mite heavy?"

'God damn, boy, I c'n swing 'er!"

You're swingin' too slow, Joe. I'm a-comin' up on you."

"You got a way to go yet, boy!" Joe answered truthfully. All

the same, soon as Whit had his back to him, Joe began to faster. It didn't lengthen his swing any.

Whit, passing the crowd, had a good many things call him. "What you got hid in the woods over there, Whit? K skim milk?' "You better wax him, Whit, or your pa'll git a lickin'." "You're mowin' good, Whit. You c'n catch him ain't got more'n half a mile on you."

Lawrence Murphy called out to him, "You're doin' good. You keep a-goin'."

Down at the end of the field, Whit stopped and whet where there was no one to bother him. He had gained ea now so that they could all see it. Joe didn't offer a word to this time.

"Faster yet, Joe," said Whit, "I'm a-comin' up on you didn't sound in his ears like his own voice at all.

Joe swore some in English, and he swore some in Portug- He knew Whit was coming!—and he tried to mow faster began to miss some, and that brought Mr. Gowan down on "Mow clean, Joe," Mr. Gowan said to him.

As Joe passed the middle, they shouted encouragement had bets riding on him. A man ran out from the crowd to h "Have some brandy and water, Joe—just a swallow." Joe it gratefully. "He can't catch you, Joe. Keep a-goin'! [illegible] more'n half done now. How're you feelin'?" Joe, his f d she ing, said he was fine. smile

The man turned away. "You look it," he said. s str

A boy with two musquash skins bet on Joe shouted ave a whet his scythe for him. Joe shook his head. "Go on, Jo another boy—the one who'd bet with the first one. "re Leave him whet it!" This was a subtle thrust. Even the enjoyed it. They began to wrestle each other, rolling ove over.

Joe whetted a moment after his drink and then fell to m ing. The pain in his side didn't trouble him now—he'd fo ten about it. He made a great show of mowing—while he here in the middle where they could see him.

But what they saw was that Whit was then making his turn. A man didn't have to be sober to figure out what that meant: the Portygee's lead had been cut now to half what it had been. Those who had bet on Joe began to fall silent.

Ensign squeezed back a grin, spat, and decided that Mr. Gowan could have no objection—

By the keg, he met Murphy. "How's he look to you?" Lord asked.

"How does who look?"

"The young un."

"You bet on him?" asked Murphy.

"Some. So did you, didn't you?"

"Some. He looks all right."

"Mowin' smooth, ain't he?" offered Ensign.

"You mean clean?"

"No, smooth. Way he does it."

"Smooth, right enough," Murphy conceded "Smoother'n whale ile runnin' out'n a spiggit. Question is: can he last?" That had been the question to start with "Think Thett'll pay you?"

Trust a tailor to hear things! "One way or another."

"Well, you don't stand to lose much," Murphy said com-ably; "not compared to what you bet with Captain."

"ou ain't hard of hearin', are you?"

"ot very, no." Murphy smiled faintly. "Thett goin' to pay Latin? He's got it to spare, I guess."

"aybe. We ain't settled that part of it."

"ou better let him. Be a handy thing for you, Latin would. n Mr. Gowan could talk it together."

"'s an idea, anyhow."

"hat's all it is. Surely. It's a good one, though, ain't it? I s you can say 'three pound' in Latin. I don't know, though."

Ensign said blandly, "No, you don't, do you?"

Murphy laughed with him

They watched Whit coming toward them. Lord said, "He 't act none like a man missed his dinner."

"Maybe he don't miss it. He's a trapper—off 'n on, anyhow. They don't eat more'n once a week, trappers don't, generally."

"Still, Whit done better'n a day's work for most men this forenoon."

"I guess it won't be the first time for that either," said Murphy. "Now'n again, I sh'd think somebody'd have t' work down t' their place."

"Look at him mow, will you?"

"He's a-mowin'."

They watched raptly.

After some time, it was Murphy who tried to sum up for them both. "I d'know as I ever see anything prettier."

Lord moved his head from side to side in agreement.

Whit himself was clear in his own mind as to how things were going. He found it no trouble to reckon how many cross-ings were left; and how much he was gaining. If he could keep going this way, he would catch Joe—but without much to spare. That is, he would catch him if Joe didn't pick up any. And he doubted Joe would. Joe, from what Whit could see, was going about as tight as he could now—he looked to be, anyhow.

The thing that scared Whit was this very clearness. He'd felt it before, and he knew too well what it came from. It came from not eating. If he'd been traveling in the woods now, he'd ha' stopped for a spell—unless he was onto something—and had him a bite to eat. This was a false clearness; you couldn't trust it. Things seemed clear, he knew, only because there was a whole mess of things his brain wouldn't take any account of. Next thing in order, he'd be getting lightheaded. And pretty soon after that he wouldn't know what he was doing. He'd been through it before. He'd waked up in his lean-to once in the winter with no knowledge at all of how he had got there. A man couldn't expect to be that lucky twice.

He couldn't bate now, though. He'd got to keep going.

So he kept going. He told himself, "When he whets, you can whet, but not until then. Your edge had ought to hold out longer'n his does."

Joe didn't stop to whet, and Whit didn't notice. Mr. Gowan did, though—and Mr. Gowan said nothing They weren't mowing as clean as they had been, but one wasn't any worse than the other.

Whit had come up close enough now so that when he raised his eyes to it, he could see the red bow on Joe's pigtail waving and bobbing not far in front of him. The space between him and Joe, though, seemed to have got pretty solid Whit had no sense of motion any more, no feeling of moving forward over the field. All he knew was that he was up hard against that solid space between him and Joe, trying somehow to get through it.

Now and again, he seemed to feel himself falling . . but each time he'd recover. It was hard for him to get his breath into him. The pain in his arms and the way his back hurt him, he took for granted; he didn't mind that. What he did mind was that his body had quit on him. He couldn't make it do anything. It seemed to have gone dead—same as it does in a dream, when a man tries to run He *knew* he could catch Joe and go past him —if only his body would do as it ought to. This made him angry. He wanted to cry—and he did cry a little The space between him and Joe still was solid. He hacked away at it . . .

The scarlet bow had grown bigger It was close at hand, now, off to one side. Whit thought, "That's something that's happened . . . if I can think what it means . . . yes, I recollect: I've got to go past him. . . . All right, I'll go past him." He began to. He passed him.

. . . Joe heard the shouts, too All the men had swarmed out into the meadow and were on both sides of them and back of them. Joe couldn't mow any faster. He was doing the best that he could. He was right up against it. "Mow, you black Portygee, damn you! Mow, can't you?" Joe heard it. "You fat, Popish bastard! Mow, damn you!" Joe heard it. There was more, too, not so gentle. They didn't like to lose money.

Still, there were some who had bet on the Portygee who were cheering Whit on because they couldn't help it. Thett was, for one.

Joe saw that Whit was pulling away from him. Everything Joe had won, he saw Whit lugging off with him. It was hard on Joe.

He saw Whit's legs moving away, two steps . . . and two steps . . . he saw the muscles working in the calves of them, just below where Whit's pants came to . . .

"God damn you, Joe, you're no good!" a man shouted.

That bit into Joe. He stepped toward the legs—four steps—and swung his scythe at them

Gowan jumped him He'd been right behind Joe and in one leap he was on him and had struck down Joe's arm—his right one—*just about at the elbow. The tip of Joe's scythe was raised* up, so that it sliced across the back of Whit's legs between the knee and the seat of Whit's breeches, cutting the leather clean as a razor would and fetching Whit, too, but not deeply—not deep enough for a tendon

Lord wasn't more than half a jump behind Mr Gowan and the three of them went down in a heap. Mr. Gowan rolled off and stood up—and was followed by Ensign Joe, as he got to his feet, reached for his knife. Ensign hit him Joe seemed to fall, at first, slowly, in a puzzled way. He landed loosely, his head rolled—and he stayed there Ensign stood over him, but there was no need to.

A voice said admiringly, "God, Ens'n, you hit him"

It was beginning to come to Ensign that he might broken his hand. That was the way it felt, anyhow. He answer.

The men had forgotten Whit for the moment, watching the scuffle.

Old David Gillmor's voice crowed like a rooster. "And Whit," David marveled, "Whit still a-mowin'!"

They looked round then. Whit was still mowing. He was finishing out his swath—with the blood running slowly down the backs of his legs to his heels. Whit, they guessed, didn't know that—they couldn't tell, even, if he knew he was mowing.

Then they saw the girl standing there at the finish—waiting

—standing stock-still. She was standing at the place she had known Whit would come to.

It was a strange thing to see. No one spoke. Whit made his last swing, grounded the heel of his scythe, and with both hands clasped round the snath, stood there and leaned on it. His head was bowed forward and his knees ready to buckle. He swayed with his breathing.

The girl made no move.

Then Whit looked up at her. He didn't start any, so he must have known she was there—or at any rate been expecting her. She didn't start either. She was waiting—gently, somehow—for him to say something. A breeze riffled her hair. Ensign, watching them, felt Joe stir under him; he kicked him to make him stay quiet.

"I guess," Whit said to her, "that'll—take care of the mowin'."

"Yes, Whit."

"I'll be over—tomorrow t'rake it."

"Yes," she told him, no one hearing her, only Whit, if he did. Whit put his scythe to his shoulder and looked round for the place he must head for—saw it—and set off for home. He went down to the end of the meadow and then disappeared into the woods. It was the same way he'd come. No one spoke to him nor called after him.

David Gillmor said, "Where he's walked, t'wouldn't take no Injun to track him."

"That ain't a deep cut," a man said; "the blood didn't squirt out any."

"'Tain't so deep as your'n was, anyhow, is it, David?" said another. "He didn't lug no scythe off in it."

They all laughed at that. They felt better.

When they turned round to look at the girl again, she had gone.

There was still some rum left in the barrel, and they cleaned that up in jig time. Then some went up to the tavern, but more of them went home—they didn't want to pay Captain for supper. They felt pretty well satisfied, on the whole; they had some-

thing to talk about. And tomorrow, if this weather'd hold, they'd be all day again haying.

Mr. Gowan saw Joe safely started, and then he followed Whit through the woods until there weren't any more bloodstains. He decided Whit was all right, then, and didn't need him to look out for him. He lay down to rest himself for five or ten minutes and then he got up and took a line for his own place. He was tired.

4

WHIT HAD traveled more than a mile on his way home before he discovered the cut on his legs. It came about then only because, his scythe being such a bad thing in the low places where there was underbrush, he'd gone a little out of his way up onto a horseback. It was steep climbing the side of the horseback and slippery with pine needles. When he got to the top, he felt faint. So he sat down to rest himself, and that was when he saw the blood on the backs of his legs. But his head was ringing so much he didn't want to try to figure out how the blood came to be there. It seemed like one thing too many, he let it go. He brushed aside the dry twigs with the flat of his hand and laid himself down in the hot smell of the pine needles.

For a time, his head swirled pretty badly, and then that was overlaid with a thin kind of sleep. When the sleep lifted, he knew where he was, and that he was thirsty; he made out that it was close on to sundown, remembered Melissa as he had last seen her, and even remembered something about a cut on his legs. He tried to think what he ought to do. Thirst pushed everything else aside. He thought about water, and he seemed to recollect that there was a stream on the south side of this horseback that might be dry, or it mightn't. That was all that was needed to get him up onto his knees, and then onto his feet. When his head cleared a little, he slid down the slope, and stumbled and pushed his way through to the stream. He might have missed it if he hadn't stepped in it.

He lay down and drank all he wanted to, made free with the water over his head and his arms, and then sat with his feet in the brook. He was all right now, he told himself—and he set about washing the blood off his legs. How in the world he'd come by that cut, he couldn't figure. Finally he got up and took off his breeches to see if he could tell what had done it . . . something with a good edge to it, anyhow. No, he couldn't remember the first thing about it. He looked at the cut itself, twisting his neck around, and decided to leave it alone—wash the blood off his legs and leave the cut as it was. It couldn't be deep or it would bother him more. "Sat down on a scythe blade, what it looks to me like." That amused him. He'd have to look at his own blade when he went up on the ridge again, see if it showed anything. Might be he had done it himself, somehow, coming through the brush back along earlier, and not mindful of what he was doing. Well, it was no matter. He'd have to mend up his breeches, though, before he could wear them—where Melissa was, anyhow. That was tomorrow.

The thought of Melissa and of tomorrow took hold of him hard. He thought how she'd look—of what her voice would sound like—and that they'd be a good part of the day just the two of them there in the meadow. He found the thought more than he could take care of. To get hold of himself, he held his breeches up in front of him and looked at them ruefully. "Yes, sir," he said, "you're a properly stove-up pair of breeches. I'll have to mend you"—and he put them on and went up the ridge after his scythe. He'd like to get home before it was dark. He was hungry. Even after all the water he'd drunk, his mouth was still foul with hunger, and his belly was lame and sore with it, too. Well, he'd beaten Joe, anyway, that was one thing. And there was tomorrow. If he could get home now without getting a stub in his eye, he'd be all right. He was blundering along like a June bug. . . .

There was no one at all in the house when he got there. He didn't waste any time wondering where his stepmother was. As for the others, they must have decided to lie out in the field. Or

what was more likely they hadn't been up to deciding to lie there—they had just laid there.

He ate, first of all. He ate corn bread and cheese, and drank three pints of the good cider. This was one time he wasn't going to drink water-cider. When he'd had all he could hold, he threw down a bearskin in front of what was left of the fire, and went to sleep on it. He was ready to sleep.

5 IT WAS light when he wakened. He made up the fire, and found himself a stout breakfast—cold samp and molasses, more bread and cheese, a piece off some beef she'd been soaking, and a quart measure of cider. He packed himself good and solid, and felt better for it. A man or a rifle, you got to load them up good before they can work right. He ate a couple of dried apples then, you might say as wadding. They weren't much to travel on but they did keep a man feeling as though it wasn't so long as it really was since he'd eaten.

He went out to the barn, and with the awl and some rawhide he sewed up his breeches—turning them inside out first and getting most of the blood off. He made a good job of the sewing, laying the rawhide flat each time, over and over, and tying it off on the inside. After he'd turned them right side out again a little dirt rubbed into the rawhide took away the new look. He was pleased with them.

He put some grease on his scythe blade and put that away, and then he went to the barrel and got a nice-looking piece of salt pork to take along for his dinner. Captain hadn't said anything about found, and it wouldn't do to take any chances. It wouldn't look right, for that matter. He hoped Melissa'd bring her own dinner down to the meadow. It would be a good sign if she did—there couldn't be any better. He knew, though, that if he did see her bringing it, his knees would feel funny. They were beginning to now.

It took him a few minutes to clean up his hair, grease it and

in place, and to wash his face carefully. Then he was ready t out for Butler's. If he'd just come onto a moose yard, he ln't have felt more excited.

e first stream he came to, he washed yesterday's sweat out s shirt, wrung the shirt fairly dry, and put it back on again. ould be dry time he got there. He'd have done that before, hadn't forgotten it. It was a lovely morning—wind out of vest, and the clouds high as could be!

inking ahead, he came to the question of how they were g to haul the hay once it was cocked. Captain had a rick, he ght he remembered; one he'd taken in on a debt two or years ago. But no oxen. Reason for that was, they said, ain had always been scared there might come a day when have no work for his oxen and yet have to feed them. Still, can't hay without oxen, and yesterday Captain would have ed with somebody for the loan of a yoke—young ones, he'd and not more than half broke: they'd come cheaper—and ouldn't be Captain who'd have to drive them. Whit thought like to see Captain driving a yoke of young oxen—say a hadn't ever been in together before Oxen might not amount uch afterward, but aside from that it would be a fine thing e. Not this morning, though. This morning, he—Whit— d be doing the driving himself. But you hold on a minute w, would he? Man owned the oxen would bring them over aptain's or else send a boy with them. Then what would nan or the boy do—stay and work, or go home?

hit didn't like the looks of that question. While he was g to answer it, a doe with a fawn hid down in a hollow blew times, and Whit didn't choose to pay any attention. He ed within ten feet of a porcupine that had climbed up an tree about three weeks too early for acorns and was just sit- there waiting for the acorns to grow; Whit took no ac- nt of him. In one place, he breathed bear-smell strong ugh to have waked a man out of his sleep—and didn't turn head even to look round for sign.

What it depends on, he told himself, is whether Melissa can

build or not. If she can build a load, then there's *no nee* him to stay. Captain will know that, and won't agree wit *to* stay. But if she *can't* build a load, then Captain'll figur to get the most out of the oxen, he's got to take the man And he'll take him I could teach her to do it in one or loads—well enough, anyhow, so we wouldn't lose a great it, that cart track ain t rough—because she's awful clever. I don't know if Captain ll think that far into it. He might, t no telling. Where there s expense, he can think a long w don't tire him any If he was to lose a pistareen sometime, think all night on it—and then go look the wrong place i morning I don't know as I got any call to complain, th I wouldn't have it to lose

He ran onto a hen partridge had four of her chicks with thought for a minute he might take one of the chicks al Melissa—and then decided he wouldn't It wouldn't be of a present. "A little small pa'tridge!" people would s that ain't the kind of a thing he would give her!" After gone on, though, he couldn't help thinking she might have it. She'd hold it in the cup of her hand up against her and the back of its neck with her fingers. He wished now h *brought it.*

About half a mile short of the meadow, he saw som that did stop him. blood—on the end of a brake, up bette knee-high, and about a day old or less than that Came f deer, he thought, being as high as it was—probably someo shot at it. But when he parted the brakes, he didn't see any He thought then it might have come from something a had been *carrying* Not until he saw a place looked like a print, did he remember. He put his hand to the back of h and under the sewed place in his breeches he could feel i to the touch. He laughed right out loud. A minute ago, he'd all ready to start right in tracking—hoping the blood w turn out to be a bear and that he could get a shot at it. But he'd *really* been hoping was *to get a shot at himself.* That a pretty thing, that was! Yes, sir, that was pretty.

He followed the blood clear into the meadow. It stopped out where he'd finished mowing. . . .

Whit stood thinking about it. It was before this place that d passed Joe. So when they got to here, of course, Joe was in k. He thought of how the cut had looked in his breeches and then he just wondered—standing there scratching his d—if Joe could have done it. "Yes," he said, not quite aloud, could a done it. He'd be upset over my passing him—and he go with his scythe at my legs. Yes, sir, I'll be bound that was way of it. Reason he didn't let go a second time, must have n somebody stopped him. Mr. Gowan, I expect, not wantin' uble. The rest of them wouldn't have minded. I must have n too tuckered by that time and too busy mowin' to know ght about it. I was tuckered, too, from the looks of this win'. His is about as bad, for that matter. Then I lit out for ne soon as I'd spoke to Melissa. I must have; I don't recollect thin' else that went on." He moved toward the pine trees ere he'd gone in to get water. And as she had been yesterday, let himself see her . . . while in his eyes only there was the ady green of the branches. Very clearly, he saw her—and his s parted and his eyes dimmed a trifle. He half smiled, and he iced. What he felt, went all through him. . . .

From close to the place where he was looking, Melissa herself epped out into the meadow. She stepped lightly—on account the hay stubble poking her feet at the base of her toes. She her head up and was smiling "Mornin'," she greeted him. Whit came all abroad. Sudden things in the woods mightn't tle him—like a rocketing partridge or a loon's cry in the ht. But this sight of Melissa, suddenly fresh and alive in the adow on an August morning that looked like her, made his drop and his eyes widen.

She waited, half smiling, while he collected himself—at least ough to say "Mornin'."

"Pa's lookin' for you," she informed him. "He sent me down re t' see if you'd come yet." This was almost true, anyhow; he uld have sent her if he'd been awake.

"I slept awful heavy. I'm sorry. I didn't wake up until light."

Melissa felt a little put out, for her part, she hadn't slept—or not much of any. "You didn't look to me more'n half yesterday, time you'd finished your mowin'."

"I wan't, I guess likely"

She forgave him. "You done better than Joe, though, at Joe, he went sound asleep 'fore he ever did finish."

"Did he?" said Whit, and by way of reminding her that passed Joe, he added, "I couldn't see him."

"You'd seen enough of him, I guess, time you went by He'd been ahead of you all afternoon."

"That's true enough"

"You don't know yet what happened Do you?"

"Not the whole of it, maybe. I been figurin' some."

"Turn round," she commanded

"I mended 'em," he said promptly—and didn't turn roun

"What with?"

"Piece o' rawhide"

"Oh. Did he hurt you?"

"Who?"

"Joe."

"No. Not any."

"You bled awful."

"No . . . not all the way home, even." And then shyly, be he felt the strangeness of talking easily with her: "A f thing happened"

"What?"—helpfully.

"Comin' over . . ." He told her about the blood on the back there. "A man thinkin' to get a shot at himself," he finis "I thought that was a pretty thing."

Melissa laughed. "That *is* pretty, yes. I heard Schoolm tell of things ain't a mite prettier'n that."

Whit was flattered.

"It's pretty twice," said Melissa. "Supposin' you *had* t yourself: you didn't have no gun to shoot you with, did y

-/hit's face fell. "I never thought of that," he said—and both iem laughed.

»We got to go up now," she said, "Pa'll be waitin'." When he e up, he'd be waiting loud enough to hear him clear down in the meadow.

7hit nodded, and followed beside her

hey crossed the meadow in silence, each one of them think- ıbout the day now begun. Whit wanted to ask her if the man 'd brought the oxen was staying. But he was afraid she might k he was forward.

Ielissa, in love with him, was thinking a thousand things. re wasn't one of them she could have said.

s they approached the stone bridge—three flat slabs of iite—over the brook in the alders, she walked very slowly. ıit—"

Ayuh?"

What you goin' do to him?"

Do to who?"

Joe."

Joe?" he said innocently. "Nothin'. Why should I?"

You ain't?"

No."

Ielissa hung on to that; it was what she had hoped for "He to you, though."

e don't think it. He was upset, was all, and so he tried to cut Joe wouldn't go to do that again"

Not if Ensign was there. Whit, you wouldn't be walkin' if ısn't for Mr. Gowan. You wouldn't have nothin' to walk on nly stumps, maybe Don't you know that?"

Oh. Mr. Gowan? That's what I figured. Quick, wa'n't he?"

Yes, he was quick. So was Ensign. But they can't follow you nd the whole time. You know that."

"Ensign? How was he into it?"

She told him.

"Oh." Whit, on the bridge, was peering down into the water. rob'ly under the bridge," he said.

"What?"

"Trouts," he explained.

It was Melissa's turn to say "Oh."

"What's the matter?" He was thinking to toss a stick shoulder into the downstream side—and watch on the

"'Trouts'!" said Melissa. She reverted to Joe. "Whit him!"

Whit, searching the water, inquired, "How big was h

She stamped her foot and it hurt her. "Whit Livingst listen to me, will you!"—Whit turned round and listen saw him!" she said again. "I seen his face, Whit, w were cheerin' him That's what you robbed him of, first had it That's what'll fester! I know, Whit! I saw him!"

Whit looked away. "I waxed him mowin', was all."

"No, that ain't all!"

"Well—maybe it ain't, then. But he won't come can see to that for you."

"No, I don't want you to. I can handle that part of it. I' any worse than the rest of 'em, that way."

Whit faced her. "What is it, then?" he said simply.

Melissa shook her head once or twice, grimly. T him, fully and accurately "Look here, Whit, since the showed up here, he's knowed they was sayin' 'Popish' an' gee' and 'old Karr was ten times the smith that you like that, ain't he? Steady, it's been. Not a good word fo anywhere. That'll gall any man. And then yesterday for a little while there, he thought he'd got clear of it. had, maybe—up till when you quit flounderin' and crep' him. When you done that, they cursed him. They back —anything come to mind, they "I though o; don't you think that they d

Melissa laug ght there in front of him— tell of things ain't He done no more

Whit was flattered.

"It's pretty twice," said Meli own in the stubble yourself. you didn't have no gun to s y. That made

hing to laugh at. Maybe you and Schoolmaster like some- pretty to laugh at. Not the rest of 'em, though. They'd laugh at a man who's face down with his jaw broke. And been fool enough to talk big, all the better. This'll last a long time.

Felipe knows it. He knows what's ahead of him. And he who done it. You done it!—not Ensign Why, if Joe was to a hundred, he'd never live that down. He's got that of him. And he knows who put it there: *you* did Pretty he'll be drunk again—soon as that jaw starts to pain him, be. And then what? You seen that knife of his under your once—and you didn't like it. I don't know as I blame you. time, *you won't see it!*" She could, though—all night, she'd seeing it—just under Whit's shoulder.

Whit," she begged him, "you *will* keep clear of him, won't For my sake. *Please*, Whit! You—I—" She waited for him something—for some sign that he did understand Every- thing there...

Whit had been thinking. He said honestly, "I'm sorry if I got laughed at."

ger seemed to burst in Melissa. She held her small fists ched, over her bosom; she was raised up on her toes with She was too angry to try to think of something to call Whit. n!" she exclaimed. Then she turned away from him, and blindly up the cart track toward the tavern. She stumbled because she was crying

Whit trailed along after her. He hadn't the faintest idea what trouble might be, but he did know that he'd done it. He'd the wrong thing, somehow or other—but he didn't know what he had said. There was Melissa, that was all—about as as a minute—stumbling up the cart track ahead of him. She crying. He followed. The day was shattered, of course, but didn't matter much now. The day was lost in the minute. lissa was crying. He followed after her, helplessly...

Melissa went faster and faster She couldn't see for the tears w. She didn't know he was following—she was just fleeing in

anguish. For her, too, the day had gone. Everything e
gone; everything broken . . .

When she stubbed her toe on a root, she *fell down* and s
there. Being alone, there was no need to get to her fee
lying in the damp grass of the cart track seemed as good a
for crying as any. An elbow crooked under her forehead, sh
lay sobbing

Whit came up to her . . . and stood over her. Even if
known what to do, he felt certain, he'd have been mistaken
it. So he did what he wanted to—bent down, and lifting
her firm little shoulders, set her up on her feet—there w
much heft to her. It was the first time he'd touched her. It
him that strange, almost unbearably alive feeling that
knows in that instant between when he *feels* a noise—sa
dark, empty place somewhere—and the time when he
But he felt stronger, more certain.

Melissa, before she was properly upright, tried to break
from him. She'd have fallen again if he'd let her. Whi
"Wait, now. Don't do that." He turned her round facing

"Let me go!" She wouldn't look at him.

"You're all right," he told her. "You ain't hurt any. Stan
will you?"

Melissa stood, shaken, not looking up at him. She coul
the strength in his hands and arms beyond any possibility
she might break away from him. She began to stop crying

"That's better," he said "Spruce root, you fell over. You d
see it." Melissa nodded.

He let go of her Then she looked up at him.

Whit had no choice in the matter. He couldn't have ke
back if he'd tried to, and there was in him no question an
fear of the outcome He knew only her presence. "M'lissa, I
you—" The words came of themselves, and being spoken,
mained yet a part of him Melissa, tearfully, nodded her h
He knew she was answering. His arms brought her in to him
to the instant his lips touched Melissa's, Whit knew where
was.

When they finally came to, they were both surprised to find they were still standing there in the cart track.

Melissa smoothed down her apron. Then she smiled up at him. "Always," she thought, "it will be this way. Always his face here to look up to . . ." She smiled without knowing it She said in a small voice, "I guess we'd ought to go, hadn't we, up to the tavern?"

As though she'd not spoken. Whit stood there holding her hand. He was looking down at her. There was joy in his face—she saw that, she was sure of it—and she saw, too, almost a sadness. . . . She understood. She was not frightened.

She said, "Now, Whit?"

"Yes," he told her, and gently, in deference, added, "I think so."

"All right."

Together, hand in hand and not speaking, they went down the cart track to the meadow, crossed it, and they came to the place in the woods where the stream ran under the pine trees.

6

THE NIGHT before, Joe, safely home in his house next to the smithy, had made sober inspection of the state of his jawbone. When he pressed sideways on his chin, he found the pain mighty—so much so that it sickened him. But the jaw, by itself, would lower and raise—in spite of the pain—and it moved all in one piece. Joe concluded that some of the sinews had carried away. They would mend of themselves. His jaw was stove up, but it had not come abroad. His respect for Ensign was limited. It was wonderful damage for a man to have done with his fist, but it was stupid of Ensign to have risked his hand doing it. A knife was much better. Well, no matter—he had no quarrel with Ensign. The painful time that this jaw would take to heal up was what confronted Joe now. He went to work to prepare for it.

He set three gallon jugs of rum by his bedside, a bucket of water, and a long-handled gourd. That took care of himself. He

milked his cow dry and barred her out of the barn, lugged double water for his pig and then fed her, and set out some water in a pan for his hens. Then he came in and closed the door of his house, and he closed all the shutters. The pain in his jaw was getting worse now; Joe knew he was in for it. He drank, filling and refilling the gourd, as much rum through the good side of his mouth as he knew from experience he could hold onto, and then he lay down. There seemed to be no way to lie so that his jaw wouldn't pain him, but the rum took hold after a time and he dozed for a little.

Joe knew the passing of three nights and two days that way, while his jaw swelled so that he couldn't open it. He drank whenever he wakened, but he had to suck it in through his teeth, and the rum spilled all over him. He was drunk and in darkness and in pain all the time.

On the third morning he wakened with a liking for water—and he guessed he'd come through the worst of it. His jaw'd limbered up some—enough so that he could open it a little—and by noon he had eaten. Later on, he went out into the blinding white sunlight and made shift at relieving his suffering cow. He gave the milk to the pig—said the hell with chickens—and went in and lay down again. By the time dusk had come, he was able to think.

He lay on his back, still badly shaken, and tried to think how things stood with him. He thought first of people. He hated Whit Livingston worse than ever, of course, but he wasn't much tempted to go after Whit again. As for Ensign, Joe—his jaw aching—decided to think of the blow as a happening His thoughts turned to Gowan—the son of an ape! But José Felipe knew that revenge on a priest was something not to be thought of.

Still, he had to get even. He had suffered enough, so that he had something coming.

It was the girl who had started it. Joe thought about her—

After a spell of that kind of thinking, there was no way of

getting her but what appeared reasonable. He might even marry her.

The more he thought of it, the more it appealed to him. José Felipe would make her a fine husband! He was a sailor, and a worker in iron. José Felipe was no thin-blooded farmer. She would see that—or he hoped she would, anyway.

What of her father? Ah, there'd be the trouble! Joe knew his charms wouldn't appeal much to Captain—the dried-up potato! There was only one thing that interested Captain. That was money.

Up until now, Joe had known he was dreaming But on a sudden, the thing became real to him José Felipe muttered, "Deus me valha! . . ." and gazed at his vision.

He had the money.

Nearly two years ago now, on a small British brig—salt from Lisbon to Portsmouth—Joe had shipped in November. That was a mistake to begin with. Nine weeks they were at it . . . sneak along with a fair wind, and heave to when it headed them Let her start a plank anywhere, and down she'd go like a plummet. Salt's a bad cargo, it got on Joe's nerves. With all of their caution, she was down by the head when they picked up Nantucket, and they had a sweep out to help steer her with Cape Ann not abeam yet. Still, with the help of the tide they made Piscataqua River—with a northeast gale coming on and a thick snow a-riding it.

Paid off and ashore, Joe had started in on his drinking He'd made some little headway when he fell in with a Spaniard, a mouse-faced little man who was sober and lonely, but who spoke enough Portuguese for Joe to feel drawn to him. Joe was tired of English.

Midway of the evening, José began to grow wary. The other man didn't sing enough, and he appeared to be watching Joe. Another thing was the rat-faced little runt treated just as Joe did. That wasn't natural: Joe was a sailor. And

man paid with a gold piece—tried to keep Joe *from* seeing it!—José Felipe saw that the man was a pirate. What a pirate was doing in Portsmouth in the middle of winter presented no problem: he was after Joe's wages.

José then demanded that the man tell his business (two or three times the man had said "trader") and the man, in reply, gave a long explanation that made no sense to anyone about duties and prices and a trip to buy bacalao. It wearied Joe mightily. He was ready for women. He turned up his collar and went out of the place—and the other man followed him.

The snow was over their ankles as they stepped from the doorway, and the night was a black one. The nor'easter was on them, and she felt like a beauty. José Felipe stamped his feet in his sea-boots and he cursed the wind happily. He'd cheated her this time! He was safe ashore now and with good liquor in him! ... he'd forgotten the Spaniard, who was half a step back of him.

The rough ruts of the town made for treacherous walking and nder the new snow there was ice in some places. José's eyes vere half blinded with the snow blowing into them. But he knew where he was going.

Then he stumbled and fell—and the Spaniard on top of him. Joe's brain didn't have to work—he had his knife out before he'd fairly landed, rolled onto his back, and got his left arm round the other man. His right arm was free—and he drove in his knife up beneath the man's shoulder blade, felt a great quiver go through the man—and the man ceased to struggle. José drew his knife out again. He thought, "Now he can't kill me!"

He rolled the man off him, and then he looked him over. He was dead, right enough. Joe put his knife away.

He felt down the man's arm to his hand, to see what kind of knife he had had. He found the hand empty. He felt in the snow for the knife, but he didn't run onto it. He remembered the gold piece, then, and he found the man's money. There was a small leather sack full of it. Joe put that in his reefer.

Then he stood up and thought some. He didn't know much about Portsmouth and had never trusted the English. He thought

he'd better get rid of this fellow. He reckoned the tide to have some hours of ebb left, put the man over his shoulder, and came safe to the river. . . .

That done, he made his way to the place that he'd started out for the first time—hiding the gold in the snow at the foot of the gatepost. He retrieved it next morning.

The storm unabated, no vessels were sailing. Still he had to go somewhere, and he took the road down to Exeter, passed through the town, and lay out under a haystack, *frezado,* and the next day kept going. On the third day, the wind shifted southerly, the snow changed to rain, and the wind worked clear round to nor'-westerly. By evening, the sky'd cleared, and the cold deepened and hardened. He walked all night long just to keep his blood going. He crossed a wide river on ice none too thick for him, and along about daybreak, he came into a village. It seemed to José that he'd gone far enough. He knocked at a tavern.

It had been Captain who'd greeted him

Joe still had the money—most of it, anyhow—buried under the anvil. The little that wasn't there was what he'd paid for the smithy. Gold didn't move about much in New Hampshire, and Joe had been wary of attracting attention. But gold paid to Captain would be safe as could be—the old man would bury it deeper than Joe would himself. Nor would Captain say a word, either.

José lay there thinking . . . and in those dusky moments the business looked good to him. He trembled a little. It didn't matter, this way, if Melissa would have him or not: her father would have to see to that part of it. Yes, it was perfect . . . José smiled till it hurt him. Popish, eh? Not after their Mr. Gowan had married him in the church! And dark-skinned? Well, what of it? His wife's skin would be fair enough. . . .

He would be square, then, with the village of Kettleford.

José believed it.

When he could talk, he waited on Captain, got him and laid the business before him—no figure mentioned.

Captain, standing secure behind his goods counter, said when Joe finished. "You?"—and then he laughed a long time, till his wig fell over slantwise across his dampening forehead.

Joe darkened. . . . "Your wig's started," he said to Captain finally—and Captain stopped chuckling, and straightened his wig.

"T' business?" said Joe. "You want t' talk here, do you?"

"Business?" said Captain. "There ain't no business *to* it. You? Why, there ain't a man in the province—not in Bay Province neither—that I wouldn't sooner marry that girl to than I would to you, Joe. You know that, don't you? You must be daft, Joe!—Ensign addled your brains. Here—have some brandy. Forget it."

"Sure," Joe agreed. "And after t' brandy, then I show some t'ing to you."

Captain poured for him and had a swallow himself. "What you got t' show me, Joe? You been makin' more nails?"

Joe took a leather pouch out of his shirt front and dropped it onto the counter—keeping his eyes fixed on Captain. He saw Captain twitch at the soft clink of the money.

But Captain drew back "No, Joe! No!"—his face all twisted up. "You take that stuff out o' here!"

Joe raised the bag, and hefted it thoughtfully. "All of it gold, Captain. You like to see it?" He let the bag fall again. "You want t' look at it? Maybe you want t' feel it?"

"I d' want to look on no part of it!" Captain was breathing hard in his excitement.

Joe loosened the drawstring in the neck of the sack. "You t'ink maybe I'm Popish?" he said very gently.

"Well, you be, ain't ye?" Captain said shrilly.

"Why?"

"They all say you be."

"Maybe. Who knows? What does it matter?"

"And part black, too," piped Captain. "That ain't so easy."

José Felipe's hand closed on the money and he looked Captain straight in the eye. "I know my father's name, and I knowed

mother. You want t' call José Felipe black? Go right ahead. You won' have to say it only t' once, mi capitão."

"*I* never said it," denied Captain hastily. "I disremember who did say it, Joe."

"A' right. You got any more t' say—like t' 'black' an' t' 'Popish'?"

"No, nary a thing, Joe, nothin'. Not me, Joe!"

"Good."

"I couldn't answer for the village, though," Captain reminded him. "If I was to marry M'lissa to you, Joe—not that I could, or that I'm a-goin' to—it mightn't set good with them—if she didn't want to, what I mean. See, Joe? 'Tain't nothin' against you, I don't mean it that way. Only there's a lot of 'em round here thinks high of M'lissa and wouldn't want to see me go against her when it come right down to marryin'. They're a strongheaded people. Of course I'm her father and I know my rights, but all the same I ain't lookin' for no tar and feathers, nor gittin' rode clean down to Merrimack River atop of a rail 'n' gittin' hove in. That's the way they'd be, Joe, you bein' Popish—or they think you be."

"She your girl, ain' she?"

"Sart'n, she is!"

"Then you can say anyt'ing?"

"All of 'em!" Captain assured him Then he inquired, "You ain't spoke to M'lissa?"

"No. 'F I had, and she'd a been willin', I wouldn't a come to you. I'd a taken her off—an' t'hell wit' you, Capitão. Tell me: you want me to talk to her?—or *can* you talk to her?"

"Don't go so fast! There ain't naught I've agreed to—'n I ain't a-goin' to. I told you that to start off with."

Joe twitched at the sack, and a strange assortment of coins slid and spread out in a low heap on the counter. "Your Mr. Gowan," Joe muttered gently, "he could baptize me—if t'at what you want. I don' mind."

Captain's eyes had bugged out, and the sweat on his showed very plainly. His tongue was thick in h...

"If you talk to her, Capitão, and make her see the way of it, how I would be a good husband to her—an' I would be!—and we could live righ alongside of you, righ' here in t'is village, where she can take care of you when you get old—why, what more? You let her do whatever she want to. If you make her see that she does want to marry me—then you can let her. When she does marry me, all of t'is here"—sliding his fingers over the lovely coins—"make a nice present from me to you, Capitão."

Captain said nothing Joe didn't look up at him, but he heard the man's breathing to be something quickened. Joe stroked the coins . . . "Now t'at piece of money—" with the back of his forefinger he poked it toward Captain—"he is Spanish mill dollar Very fine money You don' see any better. All over t' worl' t'ey know Spanish mill dollar. I know; I was sailor. T'at's when I get t'is—one place an' anot'er. Oh, very fine money—ain' a piece 'n here was made in t'is country. All of it gold—" Joe stirred it d stroked it, confident, waiting.

'Come in here," rasped Captain, "and don't leave that there yin' there, don't for God's sake! There ain't any tellin' who mightn't come in." He led the way to the tiny cubbyhole off the taproom that he liked to think of as his counting room. "T fox-hole," other men called it. "I bet it stinks same as a fox-hole does, too," they said.

Joe followed after him.

7 WHIT, AFTER a week or so, went to see Mr. Gowan. He didn't see him the first time because the minister stayed within doors. The next day, Mr Gowan was out round the barnyard. Whit happened by and Mr. Gowan spoke to him. So Whit stopped, and they visited Outdoors, Whit had thought, he might find talking easier. And he did find it easier than he had expected. Mr. Gowan talked about rain and Indian corn—how the tassels had dried out this year before the ears were half filled, even—that kind of thing.

Your hay in?" the minister asked him.

Better part of it is. She's all cut 'n cocked, anyhow. Got a few to haul yet."

Hay's getting too dry to cut." Mr. Gowan was raking the ayard; he kept his place as neat outdoors as his sister did in-rs. "Some I cut yesterday, you could trot a horse on all day he wouldn't sweat any.'

I ain't never rode on a horse," Whit said, "that was meant urpose t' ride on."

No, around here there aren't any. You can't eat a horse—not a any great comfort. That's why it's all oxen. They're a dy thing, though, if you're going a journey I mean horses."

Yes, I guess they may be," said Whit. "Still, so is a river. A r'll feed you—if you have any luck—and at the same time carry you—if you want t'go where it goes."

True. You going north this winter—trapping, Whit, are ?"

I might, I guess. I'd thought something of it."

When you going?"

Fall of the year, sometime. I might go early—I d' know, ugh—soon as the cider's made—maybe before that."

You'll be early for fur, won't you?"

A little mite, yes. Fur ain't worth taking, really, not till after snow flies. I had in mind that I might look around some."

Going a tour, are you?"

Whit grinned. "You might call it that."

'Sounds pleasant. Whereabouts, Whit?"

'Well, I ain't never been up into the Grants."

'You won't take much fur in the Grants, will you, Whit? at country is settling. I thought where you went before was re to the eastward. Aren't you a White Hills man?"

"No, sir, I ain't. I been south of there—Pigwacket, Fryeburg, eat Ossipy Pond. I seen t' White Hills But I never been on 1. Coruway Mountain's enough White Hills for me, sir."

"Spirits?" Mr. Gowan suggested.

"Well . . ."

"Only Indian spirits."

"Any kind's bad enough."

"I suppose so," said Gowan. "Still, an Indian spirit . ." kept on raking.

"You're a holy man," Whit reminded him, "you c'n lay"

"Not I myself, Whit. I'd be only His instrument."

"You'd be a sight handier tool than what I would."

Mr. Gowan said nothing

"I will say," Whit admitted, "they stay to home, though. T stick pretty close to the tops of the mountains. I been on C way—higher than hardwood; I been high enough for the to get runty—that's even higher than the bears go in late mer when the lowland berries are by and the acorns ain't yet—and I never had trouble. They stay up higher yet—the rocky part. That's where the thunder is, and the light They like that, spirits do—men that know, tell me."

Mr. Gowan had paused in his raking. "So I've heard," he carefully.

"They must like t' snow, too—they get plenty of it seen it on Coruway—you take in the wintertime, when blows—I seen the snow comin' off Coruway stand out in wind just like smoke from a chimbley! I seen that myself. T a brave thing for a man to see, I think."

Mr. Gowan leaned on his rake handle. "Yes, it is, Whit

Whit spoke almost wistfully "A man could see a long from the top of a mountain . . ."

"He could, Whit, a long ways." There was silence, both th ing.

"'F 'twan't a lowery day," Whit added seriously.

Mr. Gowan's face twitched a little. He went back to his rak "How about spirits on the Green Mountains, Whit?"

"They ain't high enough mountains. And it's like you sayin', there's a power of people movin' int' the Grants."

"Pioneers," said the minister.

"All right, 'pioneers'!" Whit flared up in to whom he was speaking.

You like them, I take it," Mr. Gowan said quietly.

Some of 'em, yes."

I thought you were a trapper."

What I am is a farmer done some trappin' in winter. I ain't ugh of a one to hate all pioneers."

Most farmers, for that matter, don't speak any too well of n."

know they don't."

Why do you like them, Whit?"

There's some that I don't, sir. You got to know 'em."

The men in the towns that the pioneers left, they knew them, n't they?"

Maybe. And they know why they left, too."

Because they liked pioneering?" Mr. Gowan said dryly.

Why should they like it? What a pioneer does is to start out h nothin' and from there he tries to work up to what the ner's had all the time."

Why do you think they leave, then?"

They got their own reasons. With every man it is different. ey are mostly poor people, but that ain't the reason. If bein' r was enough reason t' go pioneerin', why, all the poor people ld have gone before now—or at least them that was able. n' poor is the reason that, when they do go, they got t' be neers instead of be settlers. No, sir, it takes some other reason ides just bein' poor for a man t' go pioneerin'. And that other on ain't in pioneerin'—it's back in the town that the pioneer . You look around and you'll find it."

"Well, then, what is it?"

'Like I said, Mr. Gowan, with every man it is different: family ubles, or maybe they done somethin', or it may be they ldn't get along with their neighbors—all that kind of thing."

"Well . . ."

'But whatever it was that went wrong, the ones that stayed me was against the ones that went off. So if you only listen ones that stayed home, what you will hear is that pi bad. I know they ain't."

ood as some land in the Grants, but at least you could keep it. I where the land is too good, they don't need pioneers."

I'll think on it, sir."

I think you'd better. There's yet another thing, Whit. There's ece of equipment that you haven't got. It may be possible o pioneering without one, but from what I have heard it is often done."

Oh, I got a good gun!"

You haven't a wife."

Whit's composure deserted him. Mr. Gowan was waiting . . . it knew that now was the time. "That's what I come about," nanaged to say.

Who is it, Whit?" Mr. Gowan said kindly.

The boy gulped a dry swallow. "M'lissa," he said.

There was quite a pause now . . . until at last Mr. Gowan: ou've done all right, Whit. And I think she has, too."

Whit was touched, deeply. He nodded slightly, and tried to "Thank you."

Come in the barn and sit down," Mr. Gowan proposed. "I e a tooth out of my loafer rake yesterday, and I got to whittle ew one." He said over his shoulder, "You told anyone else, e you?"

No, sir, not yet, we ain't."

How long is it, Whit?"

Since we agreed, you mean? Let me see now . . . it was the after me 'n Joe mowed, I remember. You remember when t was?"

Mr. Gowan said, "Yes." He was looking round for a piece he ld whittle from. "Your legs bother you any?"

'Not a mite. I'm beholden to you, I guess. That's what M'lissa s. I didn't see it. I—well, I thank you."

"There," Mr. Gowan remarked, "I guess that'll do it." He'd nd him some maple that would answer his purpose—take a g time to whittle, and make a good tooth when he'd finished. ere—you sit on that." He handed over the milking stool. F nself, he had his own chair. They sat on opposite sides of

doorway, not quite facing each other. Mr. Gowan wi knife on a stone from his pocket. Speaking of his rescue of he said, "I hope you'll not need me the same way a seco

"I don't think it."

Then a pause.

"What of your father, Whit?"

"I figure I'm square with him."

"I don't think you are. But you're free to go, all the sa much of a hurry are you in to get married?"

"Well, there ain't any special reason, you might say, know of."

"Good See that there isn't. And you're bound and to go pioneering?"

"It looks that way, yes, sir."

"What is your reason?—you say they're all different haven't done something?"

Whit grinned. "No, sir, I ain't. But you know how I'm Our place is out of it, that goes to my half brother, he's than I am. Likely he'll have to look out for Pa for a whi he finally comes into it. Still, Pa might go off sudden, get it for nothin'—though he'd still have Pa's woman hands to look out for."

"Who'll look out for your brother?"

"He ain't such a great hand to work, is he? But you I was out the way, I think he might do better. I ain't cert wouldn't. You get him good 'n hungry, 'n he might do work."

"He might, I suppose . . ." holding up the piece he'd whittling and squinting along it.

"If I was to fetch home M'lissa t' live at our place, you how it would be, sir she'd do all the work. I doubt that father's woman'd get out of bed in the mornin'."

"This maple's hard whittling," Mr. Gowan observed. "I sh have used birch. But, Whit, on the other hand, what about tain?"

"No," said Whit simply.

That's good land of Captain's. You could grow more than on it. He's got two lots—room enough for a son-in-law. You me to talk to him?"

No, sir, I don't. There don't either one of us."

can see how you might not want to keep tavern. But you ldn't have to Let him keep the tavern, and you do the farm- He might even make over a piece of his land to you—so you'd own it."

Captain?"

Why not?"

Well, first place, he wouldn't. And I wouldn't take it."

He owes her a dowry, Whit. She's more than earned it."

That's true enough."

f you take her away, he won't give her a pistareen of it."

He wouldn't anyhow, 'less he was made to. I expect he's the giest man in the province—so they say, anyhow; I never see to beat him."

It's not your place to judge him."

How can I help it? There he is, ain't he? I got to think ethin'. When you see a tree, you can't just think 'there's a can you? You think, 'That's a nice ash tree. Might have a d grain to it.' You judge it, don't you? Or you think, 'That e's a piss-oak; 'tain't no good for nothin'.' Same way with tain. When I look on Captain, I got to think something. ll, sir, I think it."

Still, he's her father. Don't forget that."

He's the one forgot that, sir."

How do you mean?"

I mean way he's treated her—in general, that's all."

'Oh. Well, then, let her have her reward, Whit. Let him make r some land to her. Later on, she'll own all of it."

Only reward that she's after is to get shut of the tavern."

'She'd be a farmer's wife if you were to stay here."

'She'd have him on her hands, though, sooner or later."

Then it's Captain that troubles her, more than the

"Both, I expect."

"She's determined to go, is she?"

"Bound and determined. She'd go tomorrow. I had to n
her some to let me look out the land first."

"Pioneering's not easy," Mr. Gowan said dutifully. "You
said so yourself."

"I have said so to her, sir."

"And you think she could stand it?"

"I think she could, yes, sir. She's rugged and clever. It's a
life, I know that. Not many do well at it. I seen some pi
that had got pretty scrawny—what with bad luck and sic
and one thing and another. Some have done good, t
Frye's men, and round Wolfeboro. They don't go hungr
they don't rual up their cabins. Pioneers ain't all dirty
ain't got to be dirty. Why, I slept in more than one lean-to
there wasn't a bug in it. I even heard of a man, come fro
mouth they said he did—I don't claim to have seen this, b
one that told me claimed to—that this man built his lean-to
then built him an office. He let his barn go till later."

Mr. Gowan refrained from any comment whatever.

"Pioneering, I figure, is about what you make it—barrin
luck and sickness, and they can strike anyone. M'liss can
it. Better than most, she could, I think."

Mr. Gowan inquired, "When her time comes, who'll
her?"

"I'll fetch in a woman. I'll get her a good one, if I have
fifty mile for her. I'll see to that part of it."

Mr. Gowan gave over his whittling. He thought for
time. "Well, I've said all I can."

Whit nodded. Then he summoned his courage and
what he'd come for. "Would you think you could marry

Mr. Gowan was silent. He knew that he couldn't—not
anyhow—unless her father approved it, and until they'd
published. "I don't know," he said truthfully.

Whit got up then. It was more of a blow than he'd thou
would be. He bit into his lip and he hitched up his bree
guess maybe the truth is, you ain't got a right to."

"I'm not sure that I have, Whit."

"That's all right, Mr. Gowan." He was having some trouble ntrolling his voice. "Well, I guess I'll go along now. We fig-d you mightn't."

"How did you figure it?"

"Same way as you do: her pa and my pa, they'd be both against I guess that's all there is to it. You got no call to mix into it."

"I don't know, Whit, I'm wondering ..."

"We didn't know but we'd ought not to ask you. I'm beholden you enough as it is. You might get into trouble. We wouldn't nt that for you."

"I can look out for that part of it, thank you. Tell me one ing: if I don't marry you—then what?"

Whit looked at him levelly. "We aim to go, sir."

"I see"—and his voice hardened. "That's sin, Whit, you know at—to live with a woman without being married. God pun-es sin. He would punish Melissa."

The boy was unshaken.

Gowan got up from his chair, he stood facing Whit, and be-use of the sill, a little above him. "Bring her to me," he or-red him roughly. "I'll marry you any time."

He turned away, then. "Maybe," he added, "when I can pre-nt sin, it's my duty to do so. It isn't so often that I get a chance

"I'll tell Melissa," Whit answered, that being the thing that his ind was instantly full of.

"All right, you tell her. She'll be interested, likely." He left hit alone and went into the barn.

Whit thought things over before he went to Melissa. He'd und he couldn't do very much thinking while she was near m; unless he had his mind all made up beforehand, he was ble to agree to whatever she wanted—and it wouldn't be until ter that he'd see what was wrong with it. If he was set on a lan, though, he thought he could hang onto it.

Mr. Gowan's advice, he concluded, was good. Mr. Gowan id that if he went to the Grants he might find when h

there that they didn't need pioneers. Worse than that was prospect that, if he should take up land there and get some cleared, they might take it away from him. Add these thing gether and there was only one answer: keep away from Grants.

All right. Where would he go, then? Well, the country knew about—at least in a general way—and where he th it most likely they would need pioneers lay between Saco and Winnipiseogee—the river on the northeast, the great on the southwest. Along the northwestern side was th row of mountains that began just north of Casumpy— called it Squam—and ended with Coruway Mountain. In that country, Frye's men, to the north, had the best land there was. But there was no use trying there unless yo money; they were too far along. In under Coruway Mou on the south side of it, there was nobody at all. Twenty south and west, at the northern end of Casumpy, he had h there'd been people for a year and a half. That might be a place to start looking round.

He decided he'd do that, and he was ready to go to M

Melissa went out after the cows right after her supper. W had got there ahead of her. Melissa ran to him, and after taken her to him and kissed her, Whit told her. "I see Gowan this mornin'."

"Oh, Whit, will he marry us?"

Whit nodded. "Ayuh—soon as we're ready."

"We're ready *now*, ain't we? I am. *Tonight*, Whit!"

Whit laughed, looking down at her.

"How long you want to wait, Whit? What is there to for? I can't bring you nothin'—the way Pa'll feel when w him—not so much as a bed sheet."

"I ain't never slep' on one yet. We got to get us a though, just to throw down a bearskin."

"I want to go with you."

"Yes, but look you, M'lissa, 'twon't take me hardly a m

to go north and look out a place—not if I go alone, it won't, 'cause I won't have to lug much, little corn and some pork, is all. If you was to go, then I got to lug stuff for you, 'n make up a fire and all like that, night and mornin'. You don't want to lay out, time as I do when I'm travelin', you ain't used to it. You let me go alone, this time; I'll make better time that way. Soon as ever I'm back here, we can go north together. We'll get married and go, then. I'll have some place to take you We'll both know where we're goin'. I couldn't get married and just run off int' th' woods with you. I couldn't be easy if I was to do that. My gorry, 'Lissa, they'll talk enough, this way! The least I can do is to know where we're goin'. I got to find me some land—some interval, maybe—and then we c'n go there It's the right way to do it."

"I want to go with you," she pleaded "I can travel. Don't leave me! Something might happen. I'm awful afeard, Whit." She laid hold of his forearms.

Whit took her shoulders. "You ain't afeard. Nor I don't think nothin'll happen. If it should, at this end, I guess you can handle it. I don't know anyone better. If it's me you're afeard for—well, I'll keep clear of the mountains, and I won't tackle no bears. And I give you my word I won't lay a hand on a hedgehog." He shook his head as he asked her, "'Tain't Indians, is it?"

"No, it ain't Indians."

"Portygees?"

"No!"

"Listen to me, now, I'm goin' tell *you* something: 'twan't more'n two nights ago that I seen clear water. You know what that means. I see a great pool of it—deep, too; it was lovely. I come up on it easy, 'n I could see way down into it. Clear? I never see water more clear than what that was. Then there come a great trout out'n a hole in the bank some'rs—and I want to tell you that feller was handsome! Oh, he was a wonder! He swum proud and lazy, not hardly movin', took a look round, and then he went in again. That was all there was to it; I didn't have nothin' with me. I woke up after that, 'n I felt pretty good

over it. There ain't a thing better a man can see in a vision t
clear water. You know that, don't you?"

"More partic'ly with trouts in it," Melissa said dryly.

"Well," Whit reminded her, "I had good luck all right t
time"

"Better'n you deserved"

"That's true enough."

"Whit—" she was again serious—"how you know !
Gowan's sayin' he'd marry us wan't the good fortune the vis
meant this time?"

"That was the start of it."

"That might be the end of it. Maybe now it's run out, Wh

"No, I don't think it Hadn't ought to, I figure—not w
pool of that size, it hadn't"

In a small voice, she asked him, "When'd you figure t
Whit? Soon, did you?"

"Well—tomorrow . . ."

"Tomorrow!"

"Well, sooner I go, sooner I'm back, I guess It's pretty
now—only three months until snow flies We got to work fa
that time, I c'n tell you"

"Yes. What would you like for me to do while you're
Whit? To get ready, I mean"

"Let's get these here cows o' yourn gathered t'gether, 'n t
we can talk on the way up t' the barn with 'em. I'm coming
with you. I got t' trade with your pa f'r some powder 'n hoo
take with me I got enough shot, but I'm clean out o' powder

Melissa looked up at him "The cows ain't in no hurry."

Whit went north the next morning.

8 THIS WAS Whit's journey: he traveled north along M
rimack River—following the road but not actually in it bec
of the brush—and passing through Pennacook, he lay the

r?ght twenty-eight miles from home. He kept on the next day, ll on the west bank, and along about sundown—at Fowler's, it r?s, in the town of Boscawen—a man set him across just out of ?endliness. He said to Whit, "I c'n tell from your looks I ain't in' t' ferryman out o' no business.' And Whit said, "No, I ess you ain't prob'ly."

The third day he passed Hucklebury Hill on his right hand, ?ntinued north to Great Bay, and still holding north between ?at and Winnipiseogee, he picked up the shore of Casumpy—eastern shore, he supposed. All those ponds—Winnipiseogee eat Bay, and Casumpy—have shores that twist in and out so ?h can't tell which side you're on; there isn't a place you can ?e the whole pond from. He went up a tree, though, and found was correct.

This was a part of the country that he'd never been in before. st winter, trapping, he'd been more to the eastward and a ?le bit north. Casumpy—or Squam—was a powerful pond, t still not as big as Winnipiseogee. In the morning, he would ?ork up around it and probably come to the head of the pond ?bout noon. There he'd find the houses of the new town of ?ndwich. There were three or four of them, so he had been ?d—Gilmanton people

It took him longer next day to get rounc the pond than he had ?ured it would, and the day was far gone before he saw the ?oke he was looking for. It was some distance off, but it came ?om a chimney—there was no doubt of that.

For no special reason, he approached the house carefully . . . ?d he had formed an idea of the people who lived in it before ? stepped from the woods He liked what he saw: the house ?as well built, which spoke well for the man, and the dooryard ?as neat—which said as much for his woman. The clearing was ?all, but the stumps showed a smooth cut. There was a fine ?ack of wild hay, and the woodpile was all maple. Stretched on ?e side of the house, a moosehide was curing that, judged from ? distance, looked to be about a week old and to have been well ?ken care of. He leaned his gun on a tree and coming out

what they had in the pot, but he put that aside. Neither did like staying here in the house . . . and he stepped *outside* so to where it was open.

The man and the dog were crossing the clearing, the dog ahead—and the woman was meeting them. She put her h out to the dog—he was a big, square-headed, black fellow and the dog thrust up his muzzle, and was glad to be home

Then the dog left her, and came to look over the stranger

Whit returned the inspection. This was no yapping pup but a dog that had dignity. He had the scars on him of a life of work. He looked as though, in his day, he'd have tackled anything—and as though he wasn't sure that his day was d yet. Whit said to him soberly, "You look to me like a pretty g bear-dog." And the dog sat down and regarded him.

The man had paused for a moment as he met up with woman, and now they were both approaching the house. "Jo she'd called him, so Whit remembered—and he saw that walked like a woodsman He was a spare man and tall, and had a ragged black beard. He was dressed just as Whit was soft leather waistcoat, a gray linen shirt, leather breeches, barefoot. His hair was loose round his shoulders and was ginning to gray. Whit would have guessed him for forty y old, maybe. He carried his gun over his shoulder, politely, Whit saw that the front sight of it had a gold bead . . .

"Jonas Moore, at your service," the man said, unsmiling.

"Whit Livingston, Kettleford. Your servant," Whit said spoke just as coolly as the other man had.

"My woman told me Come in and set down." And then undertook to give Whit a welcome—to say that both him and his wife were really glad that he'd come. He did this turning to glance at the dog and remarking, "I guess the old ain't a-goin' t' object."

Whit took it as meant.

Until well into the evening, he and Jonas Moore talk Moore talked more than Whit did, but the boy did pretty w

Among strangers, for some reason, it was easier for him than it was back in Kettleford. And from time to time Mistress Moore would help out with a question. Much earlier than this—in fact, before supper—they had got past the embarrassment caused by Whit's not drinking rum. It was no longer bothersome. Moore drank rum and water, and Whit had some spruce beer. Whit's only discomfort was that he had nothing to do with his hands. Moore was shaving an ax-handle out of a green piece of white ash, and Whit's fingers itched to get hold of the knife, it was a proper ax-handle knife that had been made for the purpose, and he could see that the blade was perfection itself And Mrs. Moore had her wheel.

The old dog lay by the fire, outstretched on his side, and deep in good sleep. Now and again his innards would rumble, and sometimes a leg twitch. He looked very comfortable.

"Around here," Jonas Moore said, "there is all kinds of land You go two-three mile to the northwest now, f'r instance, and you'll come on it wonderful rocky and steep. That's where I got this moose-deer that you see the hide of outside—me'n two others She got up in there in them rocks and she stove up a leg "

"Foreleg?" said Whit . and Moore told the whole story. He concluded: "I d'know as I'd want t' wear any moccasin was made out'n the knee of that leg that got broke I shouldn't wonder there might be bad luck in it Was for her, surely."

"You couldn't never be certain," Whit agreed with him; "not unless something happened Then you would know."

"Yes, you would, I suppose But now Beede he figures it t' other way round." Beede was one of the other two men who had helped kill the moose, and it was in the dividing up of the beast that the question came up "He says it was good luck for us that she did get her leg broke, and he'd sooner have the leather from that knee than from her off leg. How would you feel about it?"

"Well, if I was in your room," Whit answered thoughtfully, "I think I'd let him have it, I d'know but I would."

"Why?" Mrs. Moore said.

"I d'know . . ."

"Why?"

"Well, I would say to myself: there is some kind of luck in it, either good luck or bad. You don't know which it is: it can be either way. So the chances are it is bad luck because everybody knows there is more things that is bad luck than what there is good. I think I'd let him have it."

"Well, that's what I done," pronounced Jonas Moore. "Besides, it had a crack in it that he didn't see."

"Don't Beedle!" Mrs. Moore said. "Don't you believe that he didn't see it!"

"Well, he didn't say nothin'."

"He never does."

It was an unprofitable topic—and his wife had the right of it. Jonas abandoned it. "But what I say about land," he went on to Whit, "—in the township of Sandwich, and Sandwich Addition there is interval, mountains, wild meadow, and hills. There is rocks of all sizes from boulders to stones, there is clay and there is gravel, and there's woodmould on sand. There is good hunting here—but I wouldn't say game was plentiful. It ain't so good to grow flax as the land where you come from. But a man can do well with Indian corn, or he can grow rye. As for meat, I get plenty. And there are trouts in these brooks—if you can stand the trouts—that if you wave a worm at them they will follow you home. We ain't never been hungry—that is, not to speak of, not since we come here. You can take fur in the winter—scatterin' kinds—but the same as everywhere else now, the beaver are gone."

"I never yet took a beaver."

"You never will—if you stay in this province. And you'll never make money takin' anything else. Trappin', round here, is a thing to fill in with. The fur trade has moved about a thousand miles west. If you want to make money trappin', you have to go after it. There ain't many married men into it now." Jonas Moore paused . . .

But Whit couldn't tell them.

Jonas forbore to glance at his wife. He cleared his throat with some vigor, and spat into the fire. "What you'd better do—if you want my advice, and I d' know why you should—is t' stay here t' my place for two or three days 'n go over the ground. Then, if you liked what you saw, you could go talk to Beede—he's Proprietors' Agent—and you could dicker with him If you'd like to have me, I could go around with you—I don't mean to Beede, I mean while you look round We could take the old dog. You can't ever tell—we might come onto something"

"What he means is," Mrs. Moore interposed, "he'd like you to hunt with him for a couple of days"

Whit's emotions were reeling from the impact of kindness He had to think for a minute to come at any words. "You're kind to me, surely," he said to them earnestly. "I would like to stay."

5

IT WAS too dry underfoot for the dog to do his best work, and the leaves were too thick to make for good shooting. At the end of two days all they had brought in was one barren old doe and the skins of two squirrels But Whit knew as much about Sandwich as Orlando Weed when he'd laid out the town. Neither Moore nor Whit felt that the two days had been wasted.

At supper that night, while they were all of them eating and no one was talking, Whit made up his mind. He had intended not doing this until later when he could be alone by himself—he slept in the barn—but he found it a thing he couldn't put off.

It came down to this: there was land here in Sandwich that was about as good, probably, as he'd be likely to get anywhere. Sandwich wasn't the best land that there was in the province, and he wouldn't get the best land there was in Sandwich. But the way he was fixed, he'd have to take what he could get—in whatever township he should decide on. He couldn't buy land because he had no money. Whatever the Proprietors' Agent was willing to give him, that would be the land—anywhere—that he'd have to take.

Of Daniel Beede, Proprietors' Agent in Sandwich, Moore had

said simply, "He's a hard man, but he's honest and fair. He wo hard, and he's clever." And Mrs. Moore had agreed.

But the Moores were the main point in favor of Sandw Whit couldn't get over the way they had been kind to him. wanted to stay. Bringing Melissa to a place where the were, wouldn't be the same thing as taking her into a place was strange. Things in Sandwich had started.

When he thought of Melissa, he was not at all drag out this business of finding a place. A good many the last couple of days he had seen the house he would buil set in this place or that—and in the doorway Melissa to him. He had seen her crossing his clearing coming to meet h and the house behind her. He wasn't minded to comb half New Hampshire Province seeking the one perfect place house. He had marked three or four places in Sandwich would suit him well enough. If he could get one of them a cow to go with it, he'd be entitled to figure that he'd done well.

All right, that was that. He had made up his mind.

He remembered his supper, and drew his bowl toward

"You ain't eat awful hearty," Mrs. Moore said.

"No, ma'am, I ain't. I have been thinkin'."

Both the Moores waited . . .

"I was wond'rin' if maybe, sometime in the mornin', wouldn't go up 'n see Daniel Beede."

"Good," Jonas Moore said.

And Mrs. Moore added, "I hope he will please you."

"He c'n do that, I guess. I got to please him."

Jonas said unexpectedly, "I got to go up there on an err tonight. I'll tell him you're comin'."

10 WHIT WAS at Beede's by sunrise next morning— miles from Moore's, just up over the hill and hard by the ed of a little small pond. Out on the pond, the mist was shift and breaking.

He wasn't any too early. Beede was out in the yard, and about to set off for a day of surveying. He had his compass slung from his shoulder, and an axman along with him who was carrying the chain folded up neatly in a worn leather sack.

Whit stated his name—and Beede, not even waiting for him to say where he was from or to state the business he'd come on, ordered the axman to go on ahead and make ready some stakes, and told Whit to come into the house. His tone was the same to both men. He was a head shorter than Whit—which made no impression on Beede, and Whit didn't notice it once he had sat down.

Beede took it for granted that Whit had had breakfast—which, as it happened, wasn't the case—but he offered Whit a pint of good cider and drew one for himself.

Whit sat on a bench alongside of the table, and Beede remained standing with his back to the fire. "Jonas Moore," began Beede, "come to see me last night. You been lookin' out land."

"That *is* correct."

"He pressed me hard for the best part of an hour to get me to make you an offer of land and a cow so's you'd make a pitch here in Sandwich. I had to tell him that I couldn't do it. I would count it a favor if you'd let me tell you why." He pulled at his nose with his thumb and forefinger and thoughtfully took a turn up and down on the hearth.

Whit was entirely ready to listen. He felt no resentment at the way things had gone. He had shut off his feelings when he came into the house. He could deal with them better when he was alone.

"I don't know if you know it," Beede was saying, "but when the Proprietors was granted this township, they had to agree—the same as anywhere else—to get the place settled, one way or another, that is: so many houses and so many men by whatever the time was. And if they didn't do it, the grant was no good. All grants are like that—and some are lived up to, and more of them ain't. Still, nowadays the Proprietors don't like to take too many chances. Governor now ain't so easy as

"Try Tamworth," said Beede. "You know about how it lays?"

"I would guess about east, and in the main south of Conway. As to its lines, sir, I couldn't say."

"You hold still a minute. I got a plan here shows the corners and courses." He went to a chest at the other end of the room, drew forth a paper, and spread it out on the table "Step over here."

Whit didn't hesitate. A map was a thing he could never resist. Beede took him a tour of the boundaries of Tamworth; he'd walked them last winter and hadn't forgotten a thing.

"Now then, you see, Tamworth," he explained when he'd finished, putting the palm of his hand flat down on the map. It ain't any further along than what we were two years ago. Do you see what I mean? They need pioneers, and they need 'em bad.

"Now what I would do," he continued, "if I was in your room, would be to go over there and quarter the town. Give it a good going over, and see what they have got If you like what you see, you come back here and tell me." He straightened up. "I don't promise you nothin'—it ain't my affair But I know two or three of them Tamworth Proprietors, and I expect their clerk to come by here sometime pretty soon"

Whit bent over the map, getting it fixed in his mind.

Beede said finally, "If you want to make a copy of that, there's some gear there to write with."

"I guess I got it all right . . . I don't carry no compass, so I don't need it too fine . . ." All right, he had it. He stood up and faced Beede "I'm beholden to you, sir. I will try to come back."

"Good," said Beede. "And you ain't beholden to me, though I hope Tamworth will be We could do with some neighbors. And I shouldn't wonder but Moore, who don't know nothin' bout leather, might come a mite closer to it when he's judgin' a man." He showed Whit to the door and out into the yard, where —without saying a word—Beede simply nodded and left him.

Whit went back to the Moores'—and found that Jonas Moore had gone fishing. It wasn't quite time yet for the fall run to

begin, when the big square-tails that had lain deep in Casum; all summer would begin to move up into the streams, but as M Moore said to Whit as they stood out in the yard, "When I takes it into his head to go fishin', he don't need any reason."

An east wind, beginning, was just stirring the leaves. "We said Whit soberly, "it does smell t' me like a good fishin' day."

"All I smell is rain. What did Beede say to you?"

"Moore tell you last night?"

"Yes."

"He done his best—Moore did, I mean. There wan't reason for him to put himself out for me. Nor for you, too, t way you have done."

"Jonas likes anyone who can smell the same things that can. You goin' over t' Tamworth?"

"I figured I might I got to find some place for her. And I know really but what I'd ought to get started—if you wo tell him good-by for me. Would you?"

"Yes."

"Well, ma'am—good-by I—I thank you—surely."

"What're you takin' for food? That little bag you got our shoulder looks t'me kind of flat. Give it here for a min. You can't go off that way"

"No, ma'am. I'm all right. You 'n him done enough."

"Give me that bag"

Whit handed it over—and as she went into the house, M Moore muttered, "if I'd had you to raise, I'd have taught some sense."

Whit put in close to a week in the township of Tamwo Two days was all it had taken them to look over Sandwich, b Moore had been with him then, and had known what to lea out. Here, he had to look into everything. Behind each rid there might be a nice little interval—the kind of place th would suit him and that perhaps he could get because so far n one had noticed it.

The rain Mrs Moore had felt coming lasted only one night, d all through that night he lay dry and warm under the edge of ıuge granite boulder. It was a good place in a rain He stuck ne wood underneath the overhang before he left in the ›rning.

Tamworth, he found, had more good land in it than Sandwich ıere were four handsome big intervals, flat as a pond, three of ːm covered with a mixture of hardwood and soft, and the ırth one all pitch pine. The first three had some wild hay—hough no great amount of it—but the pitch pine one didn't. ː had no hope of getting a lot in any one of the first three—d he wouldn't have taken a lot in the fourth, because the soil ıder pitch pine was no use at all. He'd have to have leaf mold.

So he kept on searching. He saw a good many places—just as ː had back in Sandwich—that would have done well enough obably, and that he didn't doubt he could get. He supposed ey would give him a hundred acres perhaps But a hundred res was more than he could see at one time, and whenever he'd me onto something that looked pretty good and then start out see what the land around it was like, he'd find he was being d on. For example· he happened one morning on a natural eadow that had enough hay in it to feed a half dozen cows. hat would be a wonderful thing to have on a place! He started rcling to see if there wasn't some land near enough to it that he ıuld clear for a field. He found that there was—but it looked ːetty poor—and he went farther and farther away from the eadow. By the time he'd found land that would make a good ːld, he was too far from the meadow to get them both into one t. That seemed to be generally the way it would go. he'd find a ice little pond, or a brave stream of water—either one handy to ıve on a place—twice he came on a clay pit, and he found three · r four little meadows just as good as the first one or better per-ıaps. But he couldn't find all of these things close together and ɔcated on land that would be good land to clear.

In the meantime, he had located three of the corners that

Beede had shown him on the plan of the town, and keeping mind how they bore from Coruway Mountain, he could al tell where he was with regard to that plan. That is, he co when he could see Coruway Mountain.

If the clouds weren't too low, it was no trouble to find it. could go up a tree anywhere, and as soon as he'd get high eno to see out a little, there the mountain would be. There wa a minute that he didn't have the mountain in mind. The st ran every which way, and so did the ridges There were a g many of them that were too much alike. But Coruway Moun was a thing you could count on

There was no other like it that he'd ever seen. The lower p maybe, was like other mountains But the gray, granite p of it, solid and strong and alone in the sky . . . well, that w thing that you saw and then felt. And once you had felt it, could see it again just by shutting your eyes—see it more cle than you could remember a face,—most faces, at any rate.

All day, on the fifth day, there was nothing but rain. traveled around some, but his heart wasn't in it. He didn't anything that looked really good to him, and he was wet uncomfortable and getting hungry, to boot. Not long after no time he decided he'd go back to his boulder—make up a and hole up for a night. Being down in the southwestern par the township, as he was at the time, it wouldn't have been much farther to go back to the Moores'. But he didn't like to that until he'd found what he was looking for—until he'd f ished the thing that he'd come here to do.

He worked to his left for a few minutes and picked up a l tree—one Weed had spotted, from the looks of the spot— then he moved south on the line to a hornets' nest in a ha bush that Beede had spoken of, and that placed him a half m north of the corner

The boulder lay kitty-cornered across the town from him, a eight miles away. He took his bearings most carefully from t line that he stood on, and then faced in the direction that wanted to go. He stood there without moving for two or th

minutes, getting the country well fixed in his mind . . . and then he struck out for it, straight through the woods.

If it had been a serious matter, he wouldn't have tried it; he'd have taken a longer way there, and been sure of his way But it suited his fancy, just at the moment, to see if he couldn't hit it—right on the nose. That would be pretty good. All through the day, he'd been wandering aimlessly. He was tired of that. He wanted to feel as though he'd done something He wouldn't need to tell anyone . . .

At the end of four hours, he had to admit that what he had done was to get himself lost in a swamp He'd been in the swamp for the best part of an hour now, while the boulder sat somewhere on the side of a hill. About the only part of this venture that had turned out as expected was that now he was certain he wouldn't need to tell anyone. And he wasn't sure really that that was just as expected . . .

He thrashed around in there for another hour or more—and when he finally got free of the swamp, he only kept going long enough to find a place to crawl into out of the rain He had pretty good luck—coming on a big hemlock blowdown, six feet through the butt, and with dead branches beneath it that would do for a fire.

When he'd got a fire to going and had laid up some wood, he stopped the windward side of his shelter, and lay down to eat. It was not a big supper—some corn and dried meat—but it was enough so that his hunger no longer annoyed him.

He was still annoyed, though, about losing that boulder. Not that he needed it—he was comfortable here—but he kept arguing and figuring as to how he could have missed it. He had a strong feeling it wasn't far off from here—a mile was the most he should be out of the way. And yet that whole swamp had been totally new to him; until he was in it, he'd never guessed it was there. Well, he knew it now.

The trouble had been, of course, not having the mountain. If he'd had the mountain to go by, he'd have come across like a shot. Or if he'd had the sun, for that matter. The sun was

t just to look at it, even—same as he would when he looked
a place that was crawling with snakes.

Yet whenever he looked at Coruway Mountain it made him
l good. It was always that way. And he'd had the feeling a
od many times that the mountain was friendly—not in a
iable, talkative way, but in a way bigger than that. He'd even
t himself drawn to it.

That could have been, of course, the spirits trying to get him
come up there so that they could go to work on him. But it
ln't feel that way. It didn't feel in the least like—well, like a
nptation. For one thing, it was always the same, and while a
nptation looks good to you most times, there are times when
doesn't. No, this feeling he got—that the mountain was
endly, of his being drawn to it—looked always the same to
n whenever he thought of it. It was quiet, unchanging.

It had puzzled him often; it puzzled him now. And lying there
some comfort—with the light of his fire on the log overhead
he thought of the mountain.

"A mountain like that," he finally proposed, "could have its
n spirit. I don't know why it couldn't. And if it did have, why,
en this feeling I get needn't have nothin' t' do with them
dian spirits."

He liked the idea . . . and he chose to accept it. And then he
ought of various things that would all go to show that this
irit—which belonged to the mountain itself—was a much
ander thing than any collection of Indian spirits.

Take the matter of distance. The Indian spirits worked close
home only: they had failed to come down off the mountains
hen the Indians needed them, and now when he looked at the
ountain he couldn't feel them—well, not any to speak of. But
e mountain's own spirit could reach out twenty miles. He had
lt it do that. He often had felt it when he could not see the
ountain—when he was as far off as Kettleford. It takes a pow-
ful spirit to travel that far, and with nothing to bring it—no
arms, or like that.

And he thought of proof that the mountain was friendly. time, anywhere, a man that could see it could tell where he And to get hold of that knowledge, he didn't have to make medicine, or mess about with the innards of animals, or wa the moon. All he had to do was climb up a tree and take a l at the mountain—and the mountain would tell him what wanted to know. If that didn't show that the mountain friendly—well, then nothing would.

Whit was satisfied of it, and he went to sleep.

Midway of the morning, the rain had let up He went white pine, lopped off a few branches so that he could see around, and sat up there and waited—pitching bark at a that was climbing the trunk There was nothing at all to whether the mountain was in front or behind him. There nothing to show that the mountain was anywhere The weat come down and had taken it off. Well, there wasn't anything was stronger than weather It did what it felt like, and that all there was to that There were plenty of signs and omens so on that would tell what it *would* do, but there wasn't a that could *make* it do anything. He had heard of some, yes they weren't any good They might appear to work someti if you happen to try for the weather you were going to get how. Or, if you were willing to wait long enough, you co get what you asked for—because the weather was sure to c round to it sooner or later. But it was safe to say, generally, a man was wasting his money who paid anything for a charm a secret that was claimed to work on the weather. The wea was proof against all charms and spirits. There was noth could touch it; it was on top of everything. He was certain that.

His thinking broke off—as he felt a strange light all aro him He saw it was down toward the ground—and it was there in the sky. It was growing now, too, with a kind of swiftness—and Whit, his eyes widening, got to his feet and on to the trunk.

His heart pounded within him. He was scared and he knew but he didn't know what . . . The light was brighter and ghter. He could feel in his thighs and the tips of his fingers oncoming instant. He was all alone now—

nd then he saw this: high in the sky—not overhead, but off he midst of the sky—he saw the mountain come out.

Ie saw it riding alone in the sky . . just the gray, granite top a touch of sun on it—and underneath it was sky, same as ywhere else.

only lasted one terrible instant—beautiful—clear as a vision be . . .

—and then it was gone again.

Vhit came very slowly down out of the tree

Vhen he stood on the ground, his knees began shaking. Well, had a right to! He didn't mind that. "What I seen then," he half aloud, huskily, "was a sign, and a big one. I don't know t it means. I seen Coruway Mountain on top of the weather and by God, wan't she beautiful! I do know that." And he ed up his gun and his things and set off through the woods ly and with his head down.

little above him—he was within five or six rod of it—he ed the gray boulder that he'd sought in the rain. "That's the lder," he said, "I was lookin' for yesterday," and paid it no her heed. On a long slant to the eastward, he was climbing ridge on the north side of which he had lain out last night.

This was the thought that kept coming into his head: "Sup e I had been up there—right up on the peak of it—riding ng on a mountain on top of the sky—everything else in the rld underneath me . . . *What would I have seen?*"

—and then he'd pull away from it, because that wasn't the y that a man ought to think.

But it kept coming back to him . . .

He swung a little more southerly—putting the mountain in k of him—and the hillside rose steeply under his feet.

Spruces and hemlocks were the only trees round him—and

none of them big ones: he must be getting up pretty well (t
his left, he could make out, it was open. Rock ledges, probab
a place to see out. He moved over to look.

As he approached, he had an eye out for rattlesnakes—
there didn't seem to be any, and he supposed without r
turning his mind to it that either the place was too easy to
to, or else they hadn't come out yet after the rain.

The sun was free now, and here and there on the ledge
was a thin, wavering steam coming off the damp rocks. F
the edge of the woods, he saw that the sky out beyond
cleared clean and blue to the south and southeast. And h
into the sunlight—feeling the warmth of it good on his
Picking his way between the wet junipers, he came up
ledges—and the country beneath him reached away
maybe eight or ten miles. He was facing southeast—tha
Great Ossipy Pond only a little bit farther north than he
said it belonged. On the horizon, there was a white rim of cl
solid below and with more country behind it, but the t
was thinning where it met with the blue. Looking down
country, the white mist in the hollows was as it is in
morning.

· He turned round to the mountain—

Whit drew in his breath. All things slipped away from
. . . his sight and his mind and his spirit were one . . . and he
carried up by the power of the slow, rolling slopes—to
darker green of the pines and the spruces and hemlock
on up from there to the great gray of the top—rock in the
light—and the blue sky beyond.

When he turned from it, it was to gaze over the vall
little small interval—that was right down below. He didn't
much at first, and then things came to him gradually, one
and he noted them.

There was a flat place of four or five acres, and with a
running through it, but the soil would be deeper than it
be on a slope. On the far side, the hill that shut in the inte

as lower and gentler than it was on this side. And just over be-
ond it ought to be where the outlet made from the pond lying
ore to the left. He'd been along that outlet last winter. "Now
ait a minute," he said, "—a little ways down below there is a
ace to cut hay. I remember it well—there's an old broken-down
eaver dam, and now that the water is gone, the grass has come
, but the trees ain't had time yet."

He looked again at the interval, lying there in the sun . . .
ear the head of it would be the place for a house—just enough
the rise so it wouldn't be too far to lug water, and yet far
ough up so it would be dry in the spring Logs would be easy
snake down this hillside . . .

And as he stood there and thought of it, things came with a
sh: a man could probably girdle every tree on that interval
a day—if he worked In two days, he could And if he was to
ll them off and on through the winter—after he'd got his
ouse—and if he was to get a good burn, he'd have room
ough ready by the end of June, probably, to get a fair crop
corn—if the weather was right.

He thought of the interval as it would look cleared and with
crop coming along—a proper log house setting there on the
se, a place for a cow and with a garden beside it, smoke from
e chimney . . . It looked pretty good. "I don't see no oaks, so
he soil ought to be sweet enough, but you can't tell for certain
ntil you have tasted it. You know, I shouldn't wonder but this
night be the place . . ."

He looked up at the mountain.

And as he jumped down from the ledges and swung down
hrough the trees, he grinned to himself,—because there was no
se pretending there was any doubt in the matter: this was the
lace. "Only thing is, if I can find some clay handy. Nearest I
now of is three or four mile. That's a long ways to lug it. But
or a chimbley that's right, you have got to have clay."

Late the next afternoon he was on his way back to Beede's. He
had tasted the soil and considered it sweet. Until close to dark

yesterday and again early this morning, he had followed streams in search of some clay, and had finally found it at a mile and a half—which wasn't any too near, and yet it c. have been worse.

He was all ready for the Proprietors' Clerk. He'd take a lot or nothing, and he knew just how he'd bound it: on northeast by the outlet, opposite that by the foot of the hill, the south and southeast by the brook—where, after it's come of the interval, it runs almost due east and then swings to north—and on the northwest a line to make one hundred That would do him all right. He was on his way back to Be —he was on his way back to the Moores'—he was on hi back to Melissa.

When he struck Bearcamp River the rain had ... so that there weren't so many rocks showing as there had coming in. Still, from what he could see with the sun in hi there were enough to get him across—and he didn't pause long to lay out a route.

Halfway over or better, a rock turned underneath him, her foot missed the next one, and he went into the holding his gun up over his head. The water was only about to his waist, but down on the bottom the footing was sli.. He staggered a step or two, trying to stand, and then his ri foot slid down. He fell to his left, pushed by the current— the pain in his leg was a sickening thing. Gun and all, he w under. His right foot was caught.

He got it loose somehow, and scraping and bumping fr one rock to another, he dragged himself clear of the river and onto the bank

It took him a minute or two to get himself straightened and then he went to work on his ankle to see what had happen

He had broken a bone in it, but it wasn't the main one could feel the place with his fingers—it was on the outside, under the skin. You could feel the two broken ends scrut against one another . . . yes, she was broken, all right.

His powder was wet.

—and come to think of it, he hadn't any food with him.

He guessed it was up to him somehow to get himself back to ndwich . . .

Well, the first thing to do was to cut him a crutch. He reached and for his knife . . . it wasn't there.

That seemed like too much.

Where that knife was, was out there in the water. It had come se while he was floundering round.

He'd have to go get it. Twelve mile into Sandwich, no food, d wet powder—he wasn't going to try that without any knife!

And he went in and got it.

But he had to rest up a bit when he came out.

Then he went crawling around in search of a sapling to cut for rutch. He found one that would do to start off with, at any e—and he figured he'd probably see something better before got dark. It looked overhead as though it was going to be a od night to travel. He'd get to Beede's—well, say around noon. he kept going, he would. And if he couldn't make Beede's, he ght try for Poole's. That would be a little bit nearer, but it s south of his line. They said that old Poole was a great one talking. Whit didn't know as he'd like that if he was laid up. If he had enough left by the time he got to Beede's, he might en cut round that, and go on down to the Moores'. It would be wnhill all the way once he was past Beede's

He took a few steps, and the crutch sunk in and stuck. He lled it out and kept going. He had twelve miles to go . . .

1

MELISSA LISTENED and watched for all signs of au- mn. The heavy, rich feeling that she'd had of the summer head of her, that had gone now But the fall of the year was a ng ways away. It was that she must wait for . . . and all the ngering signs of the summer that in other years she'd hung on , this year she resented. The swallows dipped and swung fool- shly; they had outstayed their welcome. Things that belonged

to late summer, like the grasshoppers, or the first of the as- the halfway mark on the woodpile, and the smell of the ea: apples, these things she noticed, but without any excitem What she wanted to see was the swamp maples afire! She'd kn then he'd be home soon.

For the first time in her life, she liked the talk in the tav No man that came in there but what had something to say ab the shortness of summer—he'd seen something or other t meant there wasn't much left of it. "I see MacLaughlin dow the smithy gettin' some irons f'r his breakin'-up plow. I the that was forehanded, but come to think of it, 'tain't such a g while, once you reap winter rye, afore you go t' plowin'." another. "I see a mole—must a been two or three days ag had as glossy a pelt on him as you'd want to see anytime." of the winter, even "Be an awful winter for snow this w now I want to tell you. I ain't see a hornets' nest close to ground in I don't know how long That's as sure a sign as I k of. That's an Indian sign"

Let it snow! thought Melissa She knew where she'd be

Old David Gillmor came limping in one day Lord was th at the time, and Ensign offered to treat David thanked h and said he guessed he'd take some brandy—if Ensign w to go that far, it had been cold in the night, hadn't it?

Ensign said he hadn't noticed it

"Cold down to my place!" David assured him.

"That might be," said Ensign.

"*'Twas* cold!" averred David "And what's more you now my woman—I d ought not to complain, maybe—but don't seem to me like nowadays she heats up the bed, not good as she used to"

"She'd ought to put the pan to it earlier."

"Puts the pan to it early enough. Later on, is when I mean long towards mornin'"

"Oh," said Ensign, unsmiling.

"You take in the old days a man could keep warm at nig Why, I remember the time when, if a man wanted a bearsk

ne had to do was go git it. Bears was thick around here. You 'ld get a bear anytime."

Even so, if a man was to get cold at night early as this is, he'd e to wait awhile, wouldn't he?"

"Why would he?" said David.

"Twouldn't pay him to skin a bear, not this time of year."

"Why wouldn't it?"

"Pelt's too poor, for a while yet."

"No, it ain't!"

"August . . ." Ensign suggested.

"All right, August! Now I'll tell you something. My old ner told me: 'Davey,' he said—this when I was a young one 'Davey,' he says, 'it'll pay you to skin a bear any month's got "r" in it.'"

"Well, it might," Ensign conceded, "maybe last part of gust. Still, I wouldn't think so"

"That's all you know about bears Ain't a young fellow ind here now knows about bears like they used to—less it ght be Whit Livingston—'n he ain't around here. Where is now? You know? I ain't seen him lately."

"I ain't seen him either."

"He's went north," said Melissa, "—so someone told me."

"Went north, did he? What'd he want to go north for? Too rly to trap yet."

"Went to get him a bear, prob'ly" Lord spoke into his glass.

"How far north was he goin'?" David asked of Melissa.

"I couldn't say as to that"

"Well, I hope he comes back," the old man remarked darkly. That's an awful mean country"

"Why is it?" asked Lord, just a little bit scornfully. He was red of David, he didn't know now why he'd treated him.

"I don't feel no call to go there"

"Indians're cleaned out now, you got no cause to worry. nyhow, one that you cheated, David, would have died of old ge by now."

ivinced himself that Joe had a sack of gold buried under every t apple tree within ten rods of the forge and probably two der the anvil. It was in that happy conviction that he greeted largely. "Good morning to you, Joe Philip, my friend, and ery fine morning—though a little warm walking."

Joe never glanced up, he'd seen him coming. He said only apitão," not much raising his voice over the sound of his nmer, and went on beating out nails

"Nails, eh? Business good, Joe?—not that that matters to a n fixed the way you be."

"Business is no good," said Joe between hammerings. The ind of the hammer was soft on the iron, but rang clear on the vil. "Nails I make up like I used to make spun yarn—when ere's naught else to do"

The nail, cherry-red, lost color rapidly Joe had it squared and wn, though, before it had cooled too much. He tossed it into ucket, where it gave a short, futile hiss—and then he reached another.

"I come on an errand," Captain Butler informed him. He'd t been asked to sit down yet.

Joe hammered the nail out "What you come after?"

"I come t' talk business."

The nail hissed in the bucket "Smith business?"

"No. T'other."

"What about it? She ready?"

"No, she ain't ready! Why should she be ready? You and me n't agreed, Joe. We ain't agreed to how much yet."

Joe pumped two or three times on the long bellows handle. "I owed you how much t'other day at t' tavern"

Captain, undismayed, smiled. "What! That little sample?"

"You seen it all, Capitão."

Captain seated himself on a worn cross section of white oak arr had once used for the anvil "When you get done podgerin' ver them nails o' yourn, Joe, then we can talk maybe."

"What's to talk about?"

"Money."

Joe finished another nail, laid down his tongs, and then le on the anvil. He still held his hammer. He said, "A' right. c'n talk."

Captain began. He was a poor *man, he said,* but conte remain so. He loved his daughter. All he sought was her ha ness. Of Joe's money, all he wished for himself was enoug ease slightly the otherwise insupportable pain of a father lo his daughter. He was not asking much. Joe might think th ought to take more, but he wouldn't.

Joe said, "You can have what I showed you, come the da get married."

"Now, now, Joe! Don't talk that way!"

"You're t' one's talkin'. What I say ain't talkin'. What I is trut'."

"Why, God's name, Joe, that's ridic'lous! You don't mean measly handful! Why, that ain't much more'n enough for a really good black woman!—and if that's all that you offe say you'd better get one."

"You got one t' sell, Capitão? You in t'at kin' o' busin

"What th' hell do you mean?"

Joe shrugged his great shoulders.

"Now, then, Joe, let's to business I'm goin' t' be easy agree with you, Joe—and this is rock-bottom, I didn't here to trade with you, not in a matter of this sort—I'll with you, *Joe, my friend, for gold to the equal of ten* thou mill dollars. You can take it or leave it."

Joe never blinked

"You know damn well you got it, and so do I know it! that's nothin' to you, Joe; I'll wager you've all of that right under that anvil—say nothin' o' what you got buried ou the place here."

"For ten gallon of brandy, I sell you t'at anvil and all t'g under it. You wan' t' buy?"

"I don't want no damn anvil! What I want is fair treatm

"You c'n have what I showed you."

Captain's tone altered. "You know, Joe," he said thou

here's one thing I ain't spoke of. I'll be fair 'n open, and I'll take it kindly of you, Joe, not to take no offense. But it might be I been thinkin'—that I don't want a mite of it. My hands is clean, Joe, 'n what little I've got I've made fair, square, and honest. You tell me this, Joe: where'd that money come from?"

"Oh, it come from all over."

"Well, you know how you got it."

"Oh, yes. I know."

"Then where did you get it?"

"Whit Livingston, he give t'at gold t'me, Capitão, for makin' scythe blade. Now you know, too"

"You listen to me, Joe if that ain't clean money . . ."

Joe raised his eyebrows politely and waited.

"If that ain't clean money . . ."

Joe added a smile. "You're in stays, Capitão."

"'Stays'? What do you mean 'stays'?"

"W'en you try a new tack, put 'er 'ard over You los' your way, ain' you?"

"I d'know what you're talkin' 'bout. Look here, Joe, I'm serious. There—there ain't any blood on it?"

"You see any spots?"

"You know what I mean And you answer me truly!"

"What good would t'at do? You ain' goin' t' believe."

"Yes or no, Joe!"

"A'right: t'ere is blood on it"

"Oh, God! You don't mean it!"

Joe crossed himself.

"Don't do that!" said Captain. "Oh, my God, Joe! But, Joe—Joe, there ain't very much blood . . ."

"A puncheon o' blood t' each piece o' gold, maybe. T'at too much for you, Capitão?"

"A puncheon! Why, a score o' men's blood wouldn't fill up a puncheon! I see—you're jokin'"

"In my country, Capitão, we know where gold come from—back in t' old days. All t' gold in t' worl' has got blood on it, Capitão—one time or another. T' mos' you can do is t' watch

out it ain' *your* blood. You look out for t'at now—you an' much t' lose. You got more t'ings t' ask me?"

"I tell you what, Joe: I'll say five thousand."

"You can if you want to—say five, ten or twenty."

"All right, then: you name a figure."

"I don' count ver' good. You can have what I showed y"

"You're an awful hard man, Joe."

"I don't t'ink so."

"Well, I know you be!"

Joe didn't answer.

Captain said, "Well, I got no time to waste this way." H down off his perch. "When you're ready to listen to reason, come up to the tavern."

"Good day to you, Capitão."

Captain Butler strode out of the doorway. "Oh, er—" turned back again. "I forgot what I come for. Nails, nc penny. That's what I come about. I could get 'em cross ri course, not so dear as what yourn be, and a better nail Still, if you want the business . . . These here you been how much would they be? They don't run awful even."

"Same price as before"

"People claim they break over."

"Any nail'll break over if it ain' striken fair—Derry na my nail."

"All right. Half a hundredweight. What's to boot? I p pothooks."

"T'ree to boot. For me to boot, rum—same as t' las' ti

"Let's see—pint o' Medford you had the last time."

"Quart—by your measure."

"All right, a quart then You'll fetch the nails up."

"I send a boy wit' 'em. He can fetch t' rum back t' me"

Captain stood looking out the doorway. "Well, a nice day, I said before, ain't it? Hot, though, for walkin' . . ."

"I don' know. I ain' walk any."

"All right, Joe"—he swung round to him—"call it th thousand."

Joe raised his hand to the bellows pump and his fire glowed ightly. "I got nails t' make now."

Captain blew up. He cursed Joe pretty liberally.

When Captain had finished, Joe said, "You are a mosquito."

Biting his thin lip, the old man made for the doorway. This as the third time . . . and a third time he turned back again. et me look at it once more," he said, almost pleading.

"You seen it already. It don' look any different."

"But I didn't count it."

"You got years comin' t' count it."

The little figure collapsed on the upended oak piece He was mp now, and hunched over. He was a man beaten. His bowed ad nodded slightly. "Yes . . ." he said to himself, ". . . yes, ars yet to count it." And without looking up, he put out a mall hand to Joe. "All right. It's a bargain."

Joe saw the hand, and reaching high overhead to a cranny, e brought down a bottle. "Here—" he said, "drink on it."

Captain's hand took it. When he'd fumbled the plug out, he ank deeply, not gracefully, and then coughed a little. "Thank ou."

Joe plugged the bottle and set it back up where it had come om. With hammer and tongs he went on with his nail-making. aptain just sat there, not even stirring. Joe didn't speak to him, ut he was more than aware of him. Because of Captain, Joe ouldn't work smoothly. he had to think separately of each hing he was doing. Captain's presence upset him—the little igure in black, there, all drawn in like a spider. It kept crossing oe's mind, too, how he'd come by the money. Joe never liked hinking of that with another man sitting there. It was too real n his mind—clearer now than it had been the night that it appened. It would come so real before him that it seemed unsafe to have it there: if he could see it so plainly, why should others be blind to it?

Captain stirred on his pedestal. The brandy had worked in him and he felt more himself again. "Joe," he said, "I been studyin', and I'll tell you what you're to do. I'll do the most of

it, but I don't want you to spoil it. I know the girl, and I k-
what she takes to."

Joe wiped his forehead and made shift to listen.

"There ain't been but one man that could ever come
her. He went away afterward, and there was nowt ever com-
it. I seen it all at the time, and I'll give you the benefit. You
to come on her easy, Joe. She ain't like most women. You
be soft with her. Swearin' and fightin' and singin' and all
that, she's seen enough of. Gentlemen, too, mind you.
more than one away that might even have married her. I
what she wants is a kind of a humble man—this one I spoke
he was properly humble. What I mean is, soft-spoken,
kindly, and helping. 'F you could make out to be that
'stead of the way *that* you be—you might get along be
Course, I shall do my part—which, as I say, is the most of

"What is t'at? Like I tol' you?"

"You can leave that to me, Joe Well, I must be going I
hot day for walking."

"Here," said Joe, "—finish it."

"Why, that's very handsome! No—just a swallow . . ."

Captain departed, and Joe stood there thinking. He
on the anvil first, and then he sat down to think. He thoug
long time, and he came round to feel this way: that the kind
man Captain had said she was looking for, well, now that
thought of it, that was the kind of man José Felipe wa
though maybe most wouldn't see it, and he hadn't himself
now.

Then he thought of Melissa.

13

MELISSA SHUDDERED a little; it was cold and dank
the springhouse. Nor was it warm out of doors even, except
the sun. A week's gray, rainy weather had chilled all the count
side. The wind had changed last night and now the sun shone
but even at noonday, in this second week of September, it ha

tle strength to it for all it was bright. It could not make the ass hot again. Under a white pine, the soft thickness of needles ould be wet and chill till next summer, with no proper smell them; that was lost now. It would come again—far from here on the other side of the winter. Next year, in the north, there'd summer for both of them.

It made her work all the heavier, this thinking of next year . of Whit's coming before then, of all things in the future. ecause it was only this present that now stood between them. Thit would be along any day . . .

She tried to get on with her churning—but when she laid old of the dasher, the task seemed too much She needed someing to carry her through it. She knew where she could find it.

Outside, where the pans were set out for their sunning, she ood once again as she'd stood back in the summer, looking own toward the meadow. It was no great disappointment—in at very first instant—that the meadow seemed empty. She'd ot really expected that this time he'd be there. There was alays a chance though . . . Then, by waiting a moment, she got hat she'd come out for: she made herself see him—a clear, disnt figure, swinging up through the meadow. She put her hand her heart, then. But she didn't straighten her apron, or put her and up to her hair.

Back inside the springhouse, she set herself to her labor . . . It took a long time this morning There was weariness in her. Her arms ached and her back, too She could remember when hurning was nothing—she had used to enjoy it. It had seemed resh and cool in the springhouse—no one to disturb her—and he dasher'd been lighter, too Now it was heavy.

She kept on with it.

When a faintness came on her, she recollected that she'd eaten little that morning. She was not out of case, really, but—well, Indian pudding that had stood since the night before, cold beef, and cider—she just hadn't felt drawn to them. Later on in the morning, she'd drink some tea, maybe. That was why she was faint now: she hadn't eaten her breakfast. In spite of that,

though, she didn't feel hungry. Still, that was nothing to b about . . . Soon as Whit had got back, everything would be d ferent! She'd be right as a trivet, then.

She kept on with her churning . . . until all she was aware was the churn right in front of her, with her hands bent to t dasher. She was not crying yet, but she knew in a minute s would be—no one could see her. She spoke Whit's name b aloud—and then knew that was foolish.

After a time, someone spoke to her. Melissa didn't look up him. She'd got it fixed in her head that, for some reason forg ten, she must keep on with this churning.

"Here—I give you a hand wit' t'at."

She saw a great hand fix itself round the dasher below she gripped it. The dasher quickened itself—down and up, do and up—and Melissa let go of it. She stepped back and look at him—

Joe.

Melissa was frightened. She backed to the wall and put a h out to steady her.

"T' old man said you was out here"—and then he moved ad sideways. "Go out 'n sit down—" he said, "I finish t'is h or you."

She got outside somehow, and she had to sit down then b cause her knees wouldn't hold her . . .

She gazed at Joe through the doorway. The churn looked have shrunk some Joe was bringing the butter!—he'd hands on the dasher and was making it fly. He was like to p the lid out of it if he didn't ease up some!—and every stroke the dasher, his little red hair ribbon would bob up and dow Melissa couldn't help laughing—not because she wanted laugh, but just because she couldn't help laughing.

Joe must have heard her—and he waved a hand to her.

She stopped laughing suddenly.

But she stayed there too long . . . and Joe, when he'd brough the butter, came out and confronted her. "All done," he sa soberly.

Melissa said, "Thank you, Joe"—although she shrank from s nearness.

"T'at ain' nothin'."

"Well—you're stronger than I am." She had to say something.

"You ain' only a woman—and not such a big one. You need man t' work for you."

"Well—"

"I am a strong man—José Felipe."

Melissa said nothing.

"T' old man," Joe informed her, "he put too much work on m."

Captain squawled from the casement where he'd been listen-ng, "Joe! Look here a minute—"

"What for?" Joe inquired.

"I got a barrel here that I can't break over. Bear a hand, will ou?—Got too much heft to it—Barbados m'lasses."

Joe went reluctantly, muttering something.

Melissa went to hide in the barn until Joe had gone home gain. There was a place up under the eaves, she knew, where o one could find her; she'd treasured it always since she was a ttle girl. It seemed good to go back to it. Just up overhead, hen she'd lie in the hay there, there was a knot in the tie beam at made an old woman's face. There'd been many a time that elissa had talked to her.

14

AT FIRST slowly, then with a chill, indifferent swift-ness, October seemed to spread out its days before her—each was empty.

Melissa knew what she was up against. She yielded nothing. She no longer cried out for him, times when no one could hear her, but she'd found this to say to herself and she said it often: "All right, he ain't come today. But he can come tomorrow. And even if he don't come tomorrow, it can't be no worse than today was. One day at a time like this, I'd ought to be able to handle—

for a while, I can, anyhow—if I don't think too much a
She got along that way. She kept her head up.

She prayed for his coming, but not very often. There
use keeping after Him. He knew how things stood,
would do what He would do.

Things being this way, she didn't pay much heed to
presence.

There came a gray day, though, when she had hard
keep hold of herself. No matter what she was doing, she
feel the future come closer.

Seeking escape from that feeling, she put on her cloak
stepped out into the dooryard—where she found not the b
ness of autumn, but certain and near in the low, heavy
the look of things generally, the oncoming of winter. It
too. Over off to one side, she saw Joe at the woodpile. Joe's
red hair ribbon was brighter than any autumn leaves left
She watched Joe for a moment as she might a bird or a squ
he was something in motion that she hoped would hold
tention. It came to her, watching him, that Joe was round
good deal lately. Most every day, he'd be in for something
often as not lend a hand in one way or another. Come to
it, Joe must have lugged all the wood for a week now. It m
seem odd, perhaps, that she hadn't noticed it—if she'd had
lug it herself she'd have noticed it soon enough! But she kne
was not odd. She knew where her mind had been—never a

Joe's back was to her. The pile was breast-high to him, mo
all of it maple, and the sticks a handspan in thickness. It
enough wood with no popple into it, but it was wonder
heavy. Melissa never could handle more than two sticks
time of it.

Joe kept pulling sticks toward him till he had six or eight
them jutting out from the woodpile. He put a long arm out
over them, slid his right arm underneath, and, when he
gathered them, eased the load to his shoulder, settled the
gently, and started into the house with it.

He saw Melissa and said to her, "Mornin'."

"Mornin' to you, Joe. You got quite a load."

oe grinned like a schoolboy. "I come back and you load me, I carry some wood."

Melissa smiled pleasantly. "Hold on—I'll get that door for"

oe said, "I can get 'er"—and she let him do it.

She went back to the pile then, and waited. This was a pretty ng—her helping the man that she'd once been afraid of. Joe l changed some, of course, but that wasn't the whole of it. She ln't known, then, what being afraid could amount to. Far as was concerned, she could be as much afraid of Joe as she'd r been, and it wouldn't bother her any—not alongside of other fear: that Whit would never come home again.

Joe came out of the tavern, and Melissa smiled at him—half amusement because Joe was so eager to show off before her.

"You load me up," he commanded her proudly.

One after another, she put eight sticks on his shoulder. He med to bear up all right. She put on another. "There," she d, "that ought to do it"

"More," said Joe. "Give me somet'ing to carry."

She put on another stick "There!"

"Mother of God!" Joe exclaimed cheerfully, "I ain' no more'n ballast. Put some more on"

"You'll overset 'f I do. You got more on there now 'n you c'n t through the door with."

"I won' overset, I got too much beam t' me." He stood with s feet apart. "If I had a line to secure it, I could carry more yet ren"

"You got to set it down when you're in there Go on, now, be f with you. If you want any more, I guess the pile'll still be ere."

Joe stepped off slowly .. and the sound of his breathing was st like an ox's. It was the biggest turn of wood she'd ever seen man carry. Melissa stepped round him so as to hold the door pen. Her toes gripped the floor while he went through the oorway ... but he made it all right. She shut the door after him.

"Hold on now, Joe, and I'll take it off of you."

"Get away." Joe moved his left foot back, and then to let himself settle till he was down on his left knee. T. right shoulder came forward (the one had the wood on it) he bent his back forward . . . when the weight touched the f he was over the worst of it. He set that wood down as nice a woman would put down a baby that had gone to sleep in arms.

"Well, looks 's though you'd done it," Melissa comm him. "Made a terrible clatter, though, if you should a spil That there rock maple's got a wonderful heft to it."

Joe was blowing considerably. "Maple ain' heavy. You carry mahogany?"

"No, I don't guess so I d' know what it is even."

"Kind of a wood," said Joe.

"Give out a good heat, does it?"

"Might. T'ings are made of it."

"Like what do they make of it?"

"Oh . . . all kind o' t'ings Grows in hot countries—not ones, t' wet ones I seen a sloop once come in from t' Islands some logs of it in her. One went by t' board when t'ey wa loading She float high in t' water, for such heavy wood Wh your old man today?"

"Pa's out with the pigs. He enjoys to look at 'em."

"Pretty soon butcher, eh?"

"No, not'll November."

"Pretty soon, all t' same."

"No, it ain't," she said quickly. "Eleven days to . . . know how long to November."

Joe's smile was a knowing one. "You don't like t' bu

"Henry Ferguson does it," she said indifferently.

"I bet you bear a hand. T'ere ain' anyt'ing round here you d put a hand to. Look here, now: I come and I butcher. I do t whole t'ing for you. You won' get no blood on you, nor y won't have to scrape bristles. All you do, tend t' fire. Tell yo

l man Joe is comin' t' butcher. Draw for me, will you? A gill West India."

Melissa drew for him. "I don't know as Henry Ferguson would e it too kindly, Joe. He don't do any smithwork."

"You don' have t' pay me—not even a forequarter. I do it to p you. Like t' wood, I shall do it."

Melissa, when she'd set out his drink for him, had wandered oss to look out the window She'd forgot Joe for a moment and then it came to her suddenly what Joe had just said to . Well, she'd got to set him right sometime, and she might as ll do it now.

She said, "'Tain't any use, Joe."

She heard Joe set the bowl down.

"What ain'?" he asked her.

"All this helpin' you're doin'." She turned round and faced n. "I'm obliged to you, Joe, but you don't gain nothin' by it."

Joe leaned on the counter and seemed to study the measuring ks. "I remember," he said, "time was when you laughed at ."

Melissa remembered.

"Now do you laugh at me?"

"No," said Melissa.

"I remember," said Joe, "time was, you was scared of me. ou t'ink Joe didn' know it, t'at day in t' springhouse?"

Melissa remembered.

"Now," said Joe, "you ain' scared of me."

"Not a mite," said Melissa

Joe's eyebrows went up. "And I don' make any headway?"

"No," she said wearily. "No, Joe, I guess not."

Joe's eyebrows came down again lower than they'd been to egin with. "Why don' I?"

There was no way to tell him. "I don't know what you're fter, 'n 'tain't my place to say so, s'posin' I did know. But this ere's what I do say: when you don't get it, Joe—'rever 'tis hat you're after—don't think you been cheated. You could

lug all the wood in from now till next summer, and not nothin' by it. I got nothin' to give you."

"Not to give me, eh? To some other man, maybe?"

Strangely unmoved, she said, "That's up to me, ain't

Joe was stopped All he was sure of was that she was going to be questioned. "Sure," he said handsomely, "'t's right. Pardon. I don' mean to say nothin'."

"Nor I don't," she said dryly.

Joe didn't quite catch it. He still tried to square himsel ain' see nobody roun' here—a long time, I ain' seen 'em"

Melissa said almost playfully, "Maybe you scared 'em Joe." She felt considerably cheered for some reason or

"By God!" exclaimed Joe "I scare 'em a' right if I see

They heard a horse in the inn-yard, and both went to window.

"Stranger," said Joe.

"The horse ain't," said Melissa. "That's the major's he's got. Must've bated at Suncook." He had come north: he *could* have a letter.

"Priest," said Joe, "or a clerk, maybe. Big man, too, ain't By God, he's a big one!"

"He's got the clothes on of a minister. You go take horse, Joe, and tell Pa to come in here."

Joe said, "A' right," and went to do as she told him.

15

THE MAN had to bend his head more than most he came in through the doorway He was a big and ponder creature—dressed all in black but for the dirty linen un his chin—and his face even larger than the rest of him call for. He had a colorless face with the unlighted look that sho on the underside of a cucumber. With his head slightly bow he advanced toward Melissa like a one-man processional.

By the light of the fire, she saw that his little eyes searche the room swiftly, though his head didn't move any.

He halted just short of the counter. "The Reverend Jos

ter," he proclaimed, pronouncing the words in much the y that he walked, "of Durham, in Connecticut. Newly come m the Grants, I proceed now to Portsmouth."

She saw the little eyes go all over her.

"I desire refreshment," Mr. Potter informed her. "And you," observed, coming as close to her as the counter between m permitted, "are, if I may say so, my dear, most refreshing a poor missionary who has been long in the wilderness. In whole of the Grants, I assure you, I have scarce met with a ite woman who was not so yellowed by wood smoke that resembled a heathen more than she did a Christian. You'd Mistress Butler?" Reverend Potter believed he was smiling He laid his huge hat to one side on the counter, and leaned rposefully toward her.

Not greatly troubled that he wanted to kiss her, she drew ck to the wall.

Rverend Potter gave no indication of being either hurt or onished. "Ah, but stay!" he advised her, and held up a fat, ty forefinger. With his left hand he reached into the bosom his traveling cloak. "I have something here, child, which I ought especially for you." He kept fumbling for it. "Wait. ait, now . . . yes, I have it." And then shrewdly not bringing forth, he added, "But first, haven't you something for me, my ear?"

Melissa could feel no curiosity concerning any small trinket at might come out of that cloak. Standing there with her rms folded, she laughed at the man. And when she had done , she turned away and walked out of the room.

As he gazed at the door which the girl had pulled to, behind er, Mr. Potter's face slowly settled back into sagging solemnity. He was aware, however, that he felt more than a passing annoyance. "What she needs," he confessed, "is a real good blue-beech n her."

It was to Captain—when the latter had set out a bowl of hot lip and promised boiled pork to follow—that Potter yielded p what he had in his pocket.

bowl. "I don't mean to intrude, of course, but if there's any I can help you . . ."

Look here," said Captain, who thought he saw something. ell you what you c'n do . . ."

"Yes?"—the tone lacked enthusiasm

"Wait, now—let me think." Captain thought quite a ways. n he said, "Mr. Potter, here's what I wish you'd do: you c'n k this here news to her. I ain't got the heart to. But now you, 're a minister, you'd ought to be an old hand at it. If I was tell her, I ain't sure she'd believe it."

"What might the news be?" Mr. Potter inquired.

"She's been jilted."

for the better part of an hour—while Captain talked on, Potter finished a second bowl of flip and his supper—the men had the room to themselves. Captain found Mr. Potter intelligent man who always appeared to be listening and was not too free with his questions. Potter found Captain agpie.

Until he could make up his mind as to just where to head for, hard-thinking Captain kept talking round and round in a le. A good many times he spoke of the trust and confidence had reposed in Whit Livingston. Why, even the money for boy to go north with had come out of Captain'

As for the girl, said her father, she'd of course marry with neone—but that would not bring the money back.

Still, he was thankful that the news had come this way in- ad of straight to Melissa. Because he, her father, could now : to it surely that the news was broke to her easy.

About the fifth time that Captain came round to that, Mr. tter said coolly, "Is the girl with child by the young man?"

"No!" Captain said instantly. And then, somewhat paler— cause this was the first time the thought had occurred to him— said again, "No, she ain't, Mr. Potter. I asked her that, and e told me—and she tells me the truth, sir."

"You are fortunate."

"Yes, I expect so," the other answered morosely. "He co'd pay nothin' if she did have a child by him."

There was no comment from Potter.

Finally Captain said wistfully, "I do wish that you'd her . . ."

"Why should I tell her?"

"Well, like I said, if I was to tell her, chances are in the place that she wouldn't believe it."

"You have the letter."

"Sart'n I have! And she ain't goin' t' see it! This be cruel letter. 'Tain't *fit* for a woman!—let alone a young that's been raised like M'lissy. Why, do you know, Mr. P. what this letter says in it?"

"You're the one read it."

"Says he's made him a pitch and he's built him a lean-t he's got him a woman and she's livin' there with him. He they both like it, and he aims to hook on to her."

"Pioneering," said Potter.

"That's right, pioneerin'. *I* can't tell the child, sir! I ain't the heart to. Now, if you'd tell her for me—you know, kin easy—I'd be most awful grateful. Your bed and your breal and all you've et so far wouldn't cost you a penny. Or what horse'll get, either, or what *he's* had already. I do wisht you'd it."

"Well, I don't know, Captain. I can't say it appeals to me"

"That's part of a minister's job, ain't it? I always thought —breakin' bad news to folks—more p'tic'ly women."

"It is often our duty."

"Why ain't it this time?"

"Well . . . it may be. It may be."

"Why, sart'n!" said Captain.

"Very well, then. I'll do it."

"Good! I know'd you would, Mr. Potter, or I wouldn't asked you. Well, I guess this here letter can go int' the fire." I reached into his pocket.

"I'd best see her alone, I think," Potter said heavily.

Captain turned on him, forgetting the letter. "No!" he said nestly, "that ain't the way, Mr. Potter!"

"But, my dear Captain Butler!"

"Now here's how to do it. You—"

Potter showed his annoyance.

"Listen here, Mr. Potter, she'd only blow up on you and you wouldn't get nowhere. I know *that* girl, you believe me! Now listen to me: pretty soon they'll be in here, and—"

"Who will?"

"Why, the ones that come in here. I don't know—half a dozen of 'em. Three or four, anyhow—men come in of an evening."

"Well?"

"Now, then, look here: you won't any more'n get a chance to declare yourself, afore they'll all want you t' tell 'em how things is t' the Grants. You know how that is."

"Yes, yes, I know. And no sooner I've told them, than they'll say 'Well, that may be, of course'—and then take great pains to show me that by no possibility could things be as I've told them. That's the traveler's lot. Yes, I well know how that is!"

"Well, like I was saying: you go on and you tell 'em. And whilst you're a-talkin', you make sure she's a-listenin', and then you say, 'Wait, now . . . yes, by God, I remember: I seen a young feller there said he was from Kittlef'd—Livingston, his name I think—if I recollect, 'twas.' That'll open her ears for you! And then you just tell the men like it is in the letter. That's the best way."

"Why is it?"

"Because she can't make no fuss! There'll be other folks around! There ain't anyone knows this about her and this Livingston only me that's her father. She ain't goin' t'want t' tell *them* she's been jilted—not by a long shot! Later on, I c'n talk to her, 'n—well, you know: kind of comfort her."

"Well," agreed Mr. Potter, "all right, if you say so." After all, he supposed, he did owe the girl something for the way that she'd laughed at him. By this means, he could pay her. "There

is one thing about it, though, that I find rather troub'

"What's that?"

"You have asked me to speak an untruth, Captain B'

"You ain't tellin' her only what's right here in the ... you want to see it—well, no, I don't know as I'd ought to all, it's her letter."

"The point is," said Potter, "that I've never seen the

"Well, I c'n tell you 'bout him so's you'll think that you him. He ain't quite so high as you be, though he ain't short of it. And he ain't got the heft that you got by a half. He's hard and yet withy. He's slow-spoken and soft-sp and he steps awful easy. He ain't quite towheaded, thoug comes pretty close to it—say about between Indian that's ground in a plumpin' mill and a dry field of hay stubble you look across it. He's got blue eyes, I guess, though I never noticed, and his face light-complected—more p'ti when he's been in the woods awhile, though in winter darker. That help you any?"

"I may not have seen him, but I've seen a good many him. Yes, it might very well be that this boy was among Whereabouts is the letter from?"

"He don't say," answered Captain.

"The man who entrusted it to me, said he'd brought it Wolfeboro. Wolfeboro's far to the east of where I've been."

"That don't signify any. You know how 'tis with l. they go up 'n down 'n all over. Man undertakes t' carry a le 'n then he goes somewheres else, 'n the letter goes with I wouldn't doubt for a minute this was wrote from the G somewheres. *I* would say, Mr. Potter, that you most likely seen him."

"Yes, possibly—possibly I hope so—I trust so. Well, in belief that I *have* seen him, I shall do as you ask, sir. Tell now of these others"

"There ain't *been* any others! I—"

"No, no, you mistake me." Mr. Potter held up his hand. mean the men who'll be in here."

Oh, them."

"Yes. The townsfolk, so to speak—or I might say your neigh-s. Tell me about them. Are they Christians?—men of sub-ice?"

"Well, I guess it's the same way as in most towns round about : there's some is, and some isn't."

Who has the most money?"

"No one's got any money. You mean who's the best fixed?"

"Well, put it that way."

"That depends," said Captain. He went to work on the stion.

Potter listened attentively.

THERE WAS no hurry or bustle in the atmosphere of tavern. Mr. Potter of Durham was doing the talking. In seat next to the fire—a doubtful honor, most places, where y piled on the firewood in a way to blister the calves—Mr ter was comfortable.

Opposite Potter was Lawrence Murphy, the tailor—still nding the money he'd won on Whit Livingston that day at mowing or he would be in a moment. Just now Mr. Potter s treating him. That was the main reason that Murphy was tening: the man who paid for the drink bought a right to talking. Murphy was beginning to feel that this Mr. Potter d about had his money's worth and perhaps a bit over.

Old David Gillmor was on the bench beside Murphy. David s nursing a quart of mulled cider which he would himself y for someday. He'd had to promise his wife that he wouldn't ink even rum tonight because they couldn't afford it. He had pes, though, of this minister. From time to time, David would y, "Yes, sir, that's right, sir!" or "Ain't that wonderful? Yes, r!"

Ensign Lord sat with his long legs stretched out to the fire. pped his drink, and said nothing. He didn't think much of this Mr. Potter.

A little off to one side, and some ways from the fire, Felipe was sitting alone. No one had said to him, "Pull up, with the rest of us!"—least of all, David Gillmor. But Joe d mind; he was watching Melissa. He called for a pipe, and girl brought it to him.

"Pull up by the fire, Joe," Melissa said to him. "You're out in the cold there."

That warmed Joe as no fire could.

William Cauldwell came in, his mind made up at last to him a jackknife of a proper kind to split shoe pegs. But a traveler there, Cauldwell put off his business, and conf. Melissa's assumption that he'd take hot rum and water. He down on the far end of the same bench as the stranger.

Mr. Potter, reaching a period, said to him, "Good eve The Reverend Josiah Potter of Durham, Connecticut. F the Grants bound for Portsmouth."

"William Cauldwell, cordwainer. Good evenin' to you. I hope I don't interrupt you."

"Not at all! Not at all, sir," said Mr. Potter—and proved i

After a while, Thett came in, making twice the noise he usually did, slamming the door and stamping his feet though he owned five hundred acres. When they looked at him, they all saw the reason. Thett had his new coat "Looks almighty brave, 'master," Cauldwell said solemnly. "H 'bout some boots to go with it?"

"Sure!" Thett agreed cheerfully. "What'll you take for Latin or Greek?"

"Well, if you wan't to use 'em no more'n what I would Latin, they'd last a long time, I guess."

"But if you used the Latin as much as I would the boots, it would not only outlast them but get stronger and stronger"

"Very pretty," said Potter.

Thett turned and bowed to him. "My apologies, sir. I'm afra I didn't see you."

"All this book-readin', Thett"—Ensign spoke for the f time—"must a pretty near blinded you."

thett kept a straight face. "Nathaniel Thett, sir," he said to 'stranger, "and your most humble servant."

Josiah Potter."

Mister Potter," said Ensign, "is God's servant, Nathaniel."

lurphy gazed toward the rafters and stroked his chin for a nent.

aptain Butler had missed it, but he saw something was led, and he asked Thett what his pleasure was.

Why, I guess the usual." He sat down beside David."

Ielissa went to the fire to draw out the toddy stick. Thett said ie old man, "What have *you* got there, David?"

I did have some cider."

Have some toddy with me, then" His new coat made him that way.

Why, now, that's very kind of you I don't mind if I do, sir."

Ir. Potter made a rumbling noise, and then said, "As I was ng . . ." It was Mr. Potter's opinion that in another ten years Grants would be without question the richest part of the vince.

That ain't sayin' much," Cauldwell put in, "the way things now, it ain't—outside o Portsmouth. There ain't half o' t' ners from Bay Province t' Cowas has got proper boots or n two pair o' moggas'ns"

'Proper' boots!" David said. "Hell, I ain't got any! Nor I d' nt any, either. 'Tain't because I m a poor man, I ain't got any ots, William Cauldwell. T' me, boots is a nuisance."

There's been times," agreed Cauldwell, "when I've said tse'n that of 'em. How's the Grants t' get rich, Reverend?"

Potter told of the land there. He had seen, felt, and tasted it, d he had seen what would grow on it. It was interval land, and quired no clearing. And there was marsh hay for the cutting take care of the cattle.

"'Tain't all like that, is it?" Cauldwell inquired.

"Well, a good deal of it. And it's now free of Indians."

"Yes, *sir!*" exclaimed David. "We red t' place o' them fellers!"

"Lovewell, Rogers, and Gillmor," Ensign said to the rafters.

The old man turned on him. "What d' *you* know
I've kill't me more Indians 'n what you ever kill't
I've kill't two or three white men—'f you call a
white man, 'n I d' know why *you* shouldn't."

"I'm sorry, David. I didn't go to offend you."

"Well, that's all right, then, and no offense taken." He
swallow of toddy.

"When you've finished that," Ensign said, "you c'n look
for the next one."

David kept right on swallowing and he sighed w
finished. "You spoke just in time, Ens'n."

They all laughed together, and even Potter smiled
Ensign signaled Melissa.

"What you say of the land, sir," Murphy was speaking,
that may *be*, o' course, 'n I ain't never been there. Still, I
recollect as I ever heard tell of no pioneers had got any too
at it—not t' the Grants, nor yet t' the east o' them."

"Ah!" said Potter. "Precisely! And they never will, either

"Why is that, Mr. Potter?" Thett asked him quietly.

"Pioneers," Potter answered, "are men without char
They're a low, shiftless lot, sir. I have slept in their cabins,
I speak with authority. They are filthy and verminous out o
reason, and their women are also."

Melissa came round with the toddy for David.

"And that reminds me," said Potter, "I—"

"Does me, too," put in Murphy. "Mr. Potter, you'll do
the honor. M'lissy, you c'n fetch one for the dominie h
'n as long as you're at it, you might 's well take 'n fill this
up."

"What?" said Potter. "Oh, yes—thank you." The girl t
the mug from him. He said to Murphy, "The honor is n
assure you. As I was saying—"

"Not too much sugar," Murphy said to Melissa. "I guess I
more used to it the way Captain does it. Captain holds i
when it comes t' the sugar—and the rum, too, for that
Though he's got a lib'ral hand when it comes t' the water."

Melissa went on her errand.

"Now, then," said Murphy, "you c'n go ahead, Mr. Potter."

Mr. Potter swallowed, and went ahead. "You are entirely ect, sir, as to the pioneers' poverty. But no pioneer ever gets best land. That is reserved for those who can pay for it."

"You buy much?" asked Ensign

"Some," Potter admitted. And he described the land to them. did it well—he described to them good land, but it was not elievable. And he added the price that he'd paid for it.

"You got a bargain!" Captain breathed fervently.

"Yes, I daresay." Mr. Potter settled back in his corner. "Still, got to sell some of it when I get to Portsmouth in order to for my passage—round the Cape, into the Sound to Lyme, then up the river. It'll be stormy, too, this time of year. I y decide to go overland."

"Why wait till Portsmouth t' sell?" Ensign inquired.

"I never feel comfortable carrying money."

"Road's safe enough, surely, 'tween here and Portsmouth."

"Yes, that may be, of course."

"Or whyn't you get Captain here t' take 'n give you an order some Portsmouth merchant—like, say, Langdon, it might be n then you wouldn't have to carry no money."

"Sart'n!" said Captain "I'd be happy to do it!"

Ensign pursued it: "'N let Murphy 'n Cauldwell 'n Thert, te, if he wants to, all go in on the purchase." Ensign's tone dicated that a problem common to all of them was thus offered lution.

The men looked at Potter . . .

Melissa, coming up with the two toddies, saw that this was ot just the moment for her to intrude. She stood there wait-ing . . .

The Reverend Potter cleared his throat pompously. "Well, ow, I—er—"

. . . and then Murphy to Ensign: "Why don't you come in, oo, Ensign, along with the rest of us?"

All hands turned to Ensign.

l'issa went on her errand. e recognized
ow, then," said Murphy, "you c'n go ahead builded was a
Potter swallowed, and went ahead beyond her belief
t, sir, as to the pioneers' poverty could be said of Whit
st land That is reserved, them spoken—and those other
ou buy much?" asked F, their identities lost now, they
me," Potter admitted
d it well—he desc the man who had spoken, there was
ievable. And he or him, he had no significance.
ou got a barga as she'd known him. She heard the words
es, I daresay. they didn't touch Whit.
ot to sell so in here, full of horror, and filthy. She was
or my passed. With her hands outstretched before her,
hen up the the door. She wanted the air that was outside,
decide to rkness round her.
Why wai tler, her father, watched her small figure grope
neve ape, and he figured that when she'd put her hand on
oad e'd call out to her, "Hey, girl, where you going?" And
es, torment of triumph, he awaited the instant—
our v s watching her now.
me o Captain saw—with a sure and purposeful swiftness
th a sudden, out of his chair and had moved to open the
art her.
nsi ssa went through it.
s long arm was reached up and he plucked her cape from
by the doorway. Then he followed after her, closing the

and Captain, watching the latch descend softly, could
ly contain himself.
ut in the innyard, "M'lissa—" Joe said to her . . . but she
rned him no answer.
Here—put t'is round you"—his voice very different, and he
the cape on her shoulders. "Cold, ain' it?"
e drew the cape round her, but she left the hood down, and
raised her face to the wind now.

"Wind's shifted," Joe offered. "Comin' more out
Be nor'west before daylight, and cold like hell, I c
He looked at the sky again. "Breakin' a'ready. Tw
you won' see a cloud. Be a fine night to run, a' night
'twill be. You'd have a fine time along tonight—if
you could lay, you would."

He looked at her again—saw the wind whipp
back. "M'lissa," he said to her, his voice urgent but
old man in t'ere, he don' mean nothin' by it. What
talks dirty, but a lot of priests t'ey talk t'at way. T'ey
any better. Me, I don' pay no heed to 'em."

He was certain she nodded.

"Forget it," he counseled. "What t' hell; is no matt
know you're a good girl an' they know you don' l
man like t'at feller goes an' takes t' talk dirty—" S
response "—but I'm glad you come out here." Joe
around him. "God, it's nice, ain' it? Come on, we
ad a way an' t'en you forget it." He took hold of he
nd she came with him.

It was too much for Joe.

They'd gone only a rod or two, when he stopped
facing her. "Deus me valha, M'lisha," he blurted, "I do
mos' awful, goddammit, M'lisha!" He was shaken an
"Will you marry, M'lisha? . . . Oh, by God, but I hope s

"Joe—" her voice came to him steady and gentle—
want you to go home now"

Always, in order to say anything, Joe had had to thin
words first; they never came of themselves. He had to re
and lay hold on the words before he could use them. José
speaking Portuguese, as a young man, could find the words
he wanted them. But Joe, speaking English, was like a ma
frigate who'd been raised on a sloop. When he'd reach for
in the storm and the tumult, the damn thing wouldn't be
And the more pressing his need for it, the more flustered
be.

All words were lost to him. There was not one to take hol

..d it was borne in upon him—not in an instant, but slowly, .. his jaw seemed to droop a little and he lost all his balance ..t this little figure before him with her hair blown in the .. wind, but she in all other ways motionless—and above and ..d them both her voice cool and certain—that she was ..ger than he was.

..e did as she told him. "A' right," he said humbly.

..ood night, Joe."

..e tried to rebel once . . . but he couldn't quite make it, be-.. long after she'd spoken the sound of her voice lay upon ..

..the dark, very slowly, he went down the road that led to the ..ry . . .

..fore he'd gone far, he was getting back to himself again. ..hought everything over. She hadn't said "No." It was that ..was the biggest, and it was easy to come at; it was right there ..ont of him. Joe could see it right off, and no two ways about ..

..t it was simply a fact and no uplift was in it. It didn't do ..ing for him.

..t under that fact was the feeling that she'd understood him. ..s was the miracle—as strong and unseen as black ice on a .. at night. José Felipe was now walking where, except for ..miracle, he could not have walked. It was exciting and ..ulous.

..sé Felipe—in the night and the rising wind, trudging the .. to the smithy—was a little exalted.

..he had seen and had answered to—knowing that he'd under-..d too—she had seen and answered to the best that was in ..

..He hadn't quite understood her, but that was no matter.

..And because this best that was in him was something that he ..self hadn't seen until lately, Joe was impressed by it. He ..ught it exceedingly doubtful that she could resist it.

..He'd go back there tomorrow, and there was a good ch.. ..: she'd have him.

It was a chance that seemed to get better every time h round to it . . .

José Felipe shook his fist at the sky and swore wi difficulty in pure jubilation.

17

MELISSA HAD given to Joe only so much of sciousness as he'd been able to draw to himself. No gone than that was released He was *now not* in being no longer present to demand that he should be.

Standing there in the road, she saw Whit as she'd alw him . . . and she knew the feel of his cheek to her fingers same as it had been. His face was not changed any. Noth touched him. He wore the same garments. The kindnes look in his eyes were exactly as always. These things she to too long in her mind for any talk in a tavern to reach them.

But the talk was there none the less It existed as talk its existence it was spread out before Whit as a thr trouble. As a net for a bird, the talk was spread—waitin

"He could be as the talk said he was " She heard thos in her mind; they came out of the darkness.

"No," she answered, "he couldn't be—no—" her solemn face upraised and alone. The wind had brought her eyes. "I *have seen* him I know him. I can see him now she saw him. It was not strange to Melissa that the sunli upon him.

It only lasted a moment.

She turned her back to the wind and pulled up the hood cape. Skirting the innyard, she crossed the light from dows and went down toward the barn. *After* the com gone, if she were about the inn kitchen, she'd either have to deal with, or her father would talk on and on about thi that had happened. She'd be *safe from both* in the barn in the hay, it wouldn't be so much colder than what

r chamber—once the heat from the chimney had left it. f her father should fret himself over what had become of ,well, he'd have to fret himself. This wasn't the time when ıuld find an answer for everything.

: barn door was braced on the outside by a stout stick of · that was leaned up against it. By rights, that ought to stay because if she left it down they'd know someone was in But the other ways to get into the barn all meant crawling queezing, or climbing the apple tree, and she was in no to bother. She spoke to the cattle, and pushed the brace to de—heard it fall with a slapping thud into the mud of the ard—and stepped in on the barn floor. She was out of the now, and she noticed the quiet. When the door was se-, she stood with her back up against it so as to tell where dder'd be. There was no light whatsoever; the darkness ed round her. She could hear the horse breathing loudly, poke to him to quiet him—the horse Mr. Potter had come he two barn cats came up to her She went across to the t. She was as much at home here as she would have been ıere; there was no strangeness about it, and no sense of ture. And by a piece of good luck there were no hens on dder.

on the scaffold, she made herself comfortable, with a good f hay under her and an extra pile for a pillow. She lay on ide then and listened, she was a long way from easy, and not led to sleep any She knew what she was here for.

Jp there on the road," she said, "that was a vision, like. A ın is nice when you got nothin' better, but I do wish 't he'd e home again I thought before that I wished it, but now I different. Now he's got to come.

The way I started in thinkin' was: he may be late comin'. 't was some time ago I couldn't see, then, how I ever would d it if he should turn out to *be* late. Well, he's late, 'n I've d it. And for the last month I been sayin': you got fig may not come at all, y' know. And I thought I did figure w now I didn't. I tried to let on to myself that it mig

wouldn't come, but there wan't any strength to it, h knowed, then, he would come."

"And I know it yet!" she cried, gripping a handful of

She realized as she said it that she didn't know any s of course.

Somehow or other, it made her feel better. She need quire of herself any longer that she try to pretend to faith in his coming. It was no use doing that. Such fai too far removed from her. It was a relief to her to admi was the talk made her see this—not any belief in the presence.

In the stillness and darkness, her cloak drawn her, she said, "All right, I'll look at it. He will come if I do know that much But something may have h a tree, or the river, or his gun, maybe, or something late enough now so that maybe it has happened. He's now so it's just about even: he'll either come or he won'

She was hurrying on with it, because if she paused thinking she wouldn't get any further "What I'll do i come, is to go and tell Mr. Gowan. Whit claims Mr. the best man in the village, and there ain't any woma know of to go to. They don't come t' the tavern, nor I to church much. I guess he'll be kind to me on Whit's anyway. And I got to tell somebody.

"If he ain't comin' back, I'll be glad things are this give me somethin' to go on. I guess I'm glad anyhow. 'ough I'd ought to be But that's three or four months ye a whole lot of days—'n he c'n show up any one of 'em."

She could not keep it back now. "Oh, God!—God, back here!"

—and she fell to crying.

Her thoughts were all jumbled up. Before very long, ing stopped slowly. She still knew where she was . . . . she was sleeping.

She wakened, and stirred. She had no intention of g

the ladder, and across up to the inn again, and up the stairs r chamber. It was too far away. She was warm and comble here. She went back to sleep again.

e slept better than Captain, who was devoting most of his to being afraid he'd hear her come in again. If she'd stay ll night with the Portygee, then Captain's worries were He could march straight to Gowan then, and tell *him* what happened—and it would be Mr. Gowan's duty to force her arry Joe.

ong about three o'clock, Captain counted it morning. Just ake sure, he went and looked in her chamber. Finding it y—he scurried back to his bed. But he was too excited to to sleep. He lay small in his bed, shivering, and the palms s hands sweat. It seemed to Captain as though he'd never etter.

he cockerel wakened Melissa. She opened her eyes and could e out the rafters. She was stiff, now, and cold, but she was no er sleepy... and another day now at hand didn't frighten her It pleasured her, too, to know that she'd slept just as late as would have slept if she'd been in her bed It seemed like e kind of small victory over the things that beset her... and drew out of the hay, pushed some of it off her, and got to her —more hay cascading round her Hay stuck to her cloak— she stamped her feet once or twice and blew on her hands, ore she took the cloak off and shook it. But she didn't bother brush it.

As she went down the ladder, she wondered whether or not y'd be up and about at the inn now... well, she'd know from chimney. She doubted Potter'd have stirred himself. Men o wore dirty linen didn't take the road early. But he wouldn't troublesome. Hot rum and molasses would be all he'd be , and after a quart of it, maybe a piece of meat and some ge. He wouldn't bother her any, not this time in the She said to the cattle, "I'll take care of you later," the door and unfastened it. Outside it was

thought it was inside. Even at that, there was no ... the chimney. Closing the door, she set the brace up .

Then she was free to face into the morning.

It was still as could be, and not a great while befor She must have slept through some crowing—and just thought that, he let go with another crow, back inside there where the night hadn't all gone yet.

But out here it was gone, there was no sign of it. *Look where she would, it was all of it morning*—and where she could see, to the north, it was morning. Wh... was, it was morning.

She would not go up to the inn.

The frost, under cover of darkness, had come ... been left behind by it, whitening the gray-green of the. The frost was thick on all wooden things. There was ... the puddles. Past the things near at hand, her eyes wen slowly . . . past the red-brown of the oak trees and the patches of hemlock and here and there—where it show the *quiet rising of smoke from the regular fires of* ... *Over all these was stillness. They had just been uncovered*

High above all the stillness, the sky was wonderfully *with the gray going out of it and the blue spreading* ... It was in the sky only that there showed any foreknow... press of excitement, because the sun was at hand now.

Melissa went round the barn and down toward the

This side of the brook—the place where the spruce tripped her—she was not drawn to pause now, as she had a good many times, and wait for the sharp recollection day to come over her. That was not what she wanted ... was the meadow. Soon the sun would come into it.

The brook, as she crossed it, was bustling along as it did, paying no heed to the night and the morning; ra... drought were what mattered. But the winter would quie... the ice would steal over it and snow fall in the darkness

Ahead was the meadow. Soon the sun would strike in... Melissa wanted to be there.

he came up the rise, and saw the meadow was empty. She was me, the sun hadn't come yet. The grass was dun-colored. The le of the meadow looked flat and even and it was all the e color without any shadows. Round every side of it was the n wall of trees. That, too, was even . . . almost black at the of it and gray toward the top; the dark patches of hemlock the brown of the oak trees didn't stand out from the rest of t was simply the edge of the forest, straight up and down, it came to the edge of the meadow. Both had their places. ther one, to Melissa, seemed to threaten the other. And the overhead was so high over both of them!

he stood at the top of the rise and she watched to the east-d . . . *guessing* between which two treetops would be the e where the sun would come. Then the sky grew too bright e to see the tree branches.

The true gleam of the sun, in the first instant she saw it, was he sun itself—and a long ways away from her.

Then across all that distance it came into her eyes . . . and her s had to turn from it.

She threw back her hood, and on her face was the morning.

WHIT WAS traveling at night for the first time in a long ne. It was pretty slow going on account of his ankle, but he s so close to home now he couldn't have stopped if he'd nted to.

He was keeping clear of the road because of the brush in it. the woods, it was better. The down trees were the main ouble—that and watching his footing. Uphill it was easy, but wnhill it was hard for him. Going downhill to his right he ad to feel out each step for fear his ankle would roll under him. didn't pain him too much, but he couldn't put any trust in it.

Every once in a while—say two or three times in an hour—he' ome to something he knew. He'd go up a steep bank per nd when he'd get to the top of it, it would be level grou

piece with a whole mess of gray birches. He knew w was. And he went around it. Gray birches at night—l ones, that is—were worse to get through than j. They ranked pretty well up with a high-growing tangle berries and raspberries in a burnt-over clearing, or w spruce swamp full of down trees and bogholes. C a great rock looming up in the darkness. If the in it, and a yellow birch tree and a maple both growing the cleft, then he knew where he stood just as well as in day He knew what was ahead of him, and what lay to both him, and could plan out how to go. That part was easy *placing his feet bothered him—because of his an* was afraid for his eyes, too. But he got along pretty we he tried not to hurry.

Along about four o'clock, or a little before that, he lay for a spell when he came to a good place—the dry side pine trunk that lay snug to the ground with some beech under it on top of the pine needles. It would have place to sleep. Three summers ago, this tree had been He remembered it well. It was five feet in thickness—a feet, or more than that—but about halfway to the top it kind of crook in it, which was why the masters had left ate a handful of corn and what pork he had with him. F feel of the bark, the tree had blown down last winter.

The food was good in his belly, and he judged that *didn't feel any worse, maybe, than perhaps it had ought to* been on the thing steady for about twenty-four hours pretty near home now. He was close to Melissa.

He found that he couldn't lie still any longer, and he out from under the log and then, with his hand on it, he p himself upright. He tightened his belt and pushed his round to his back and also the pouch for his food and things. He had a little packet of fur—you couldn't call bundle—that he'd taken one time or another; that was from his shoulder. He felt for his knife to make sure

with him, and worked his shoulder a little to settle his blanket. Then he took up his rifle.

"'Tain't a great ways to go now"—and after a long look overhead, he moved into the darkness. "What I got to do"—his face oddly serious—"is not think of M'lissa until it's come daylight. A man travels at night, he's got about all he c'n swing to when he's got two good feet under him." And he put all his mind to the business before him.

He didn't think of Melissa, but he knew why he was traveling. He knew why he was living.

When it did finally grow light, the last three or four miles were the longest part of the journey. But there was in him no weariness. He was carried along by the blessing of sight, by being able to see things and those things all familiar, each where it should be. There were fields he could use now, and he always skirted the edge of them; there were cowpaths and wood roads. But he stayed away from the houses. He hoped he could work it, one way or other, so that he'd see no other person before seeing Melissa. He knew this was childish, and he didn't figure to tell her, but it took hold on his fancy and he chose his route that way.

He knew perfectly well, of course, that some harm might have come to her, some sickness befallen her, or most anything happened. He had known that every minute since the last time he'd looked on her. There had been no escape from it—as he'd known there could not be. Now in the daylight, it traveled right along with him. Only Melissa herself could take care of that part of it.

He thought he'd go up to the inn through the meadow. That way, he'd come to the barn first, and she might be out round there.

By the brook in the pine trees at the east end of the meadow, he made himself stop and more or less fix himself up some. There wasn't much he could do, but he had a spare pair of moccasins that he'd saved for the purpose—and they were wonderfully handsome! They were deerskin with beads on them. He'd have liked to lay off his leggins—they looked worse now than

ever alongside the new moccasins—but he had his ankle bo up and he didn't want her to see that. He did what he coul the way of getting the sticks out of his hair and washing so on. When he'd finished all this it was just about sump was not quite himself. "The way I feel now," he said, "if I to see a deer in the meadow, 'twould be a waste of powde fire. I don't feel awful steady."

He started then for the meadow.

Before coming out into the open, he did just as he alway —he paused in the last bit of cover to see what was ahead of

He saw Melissa.

. . . at the top of the rise at the other end of the mead Melissa was standing. He saw her hair in the sunlight. . . .

Melissa thought something moved—as he came out of shadow—but with the sun in her eyes she couldn't make what it was at first. "Be a cow, more'n likely." She put up hand so that she could see better—and she made out a man

In a rush, all at once, she knew what she was looking at— didn't quite dare to say it—and then she couldn't help saying that was Whit coming toward her.

—and Melissa was running, down the rise, through meadow—

Whit laid down his rifle and held out his arms to her—

He felt so solid!—his arms hard in his shirt sleeves.

. . . so he must have held her a minute or two, before turned up her face to him, and found him looking down at h

19

THE MAIN question in Whit's mind concerning Me lissa she had already answered: she appeared well and happ This was Melissa. That was all he could think of. He had nothin to ask her that was not already answered. His journey was fin ished. This was Melissa.

When they got round to talking, when this miracle of reunion hat they'd both of them counted on—was so clearly estabed that they *could* talk about it, Whit said to Melissa, "How e you was down t' the meadow so early? You must a knowed as comin'."

She nodded. "I guess I did—somehow—though I didn't know It just seemed t' me like I had t' come down here."

Whit understood—too well to say so. "You had any break-?"

"I d' know. Maybe. No, I ain't—come to think of it."

They laughed over this. Sometime or other Whit said to her, ou're all over hay. You must a slep' in the barn, did you?"

"Yes." She'd forgotten about it.

"You done better than I did. I didn't sleep any. What was the atter? Things kind o' rough in the tavern?"

She was suddenly serious.

"What happened, M'lissa?"

"Well—" She told him all about Mr. Potter.

Whit heard her through to the end of it—to where she'd lked out of the tavern. He didn't question her once.

When she'd finished, he stood there thinking it over. The st thing he said was exactly what he was thinking, "I don't nderstand that." And he went on aloud, "I don't know any otter. I never heard of him. I ain't been anywhere's near the rants—it's a hundred miles from where I been t' Connecticut iver. You say he's a minister?—with a kind of big face? What the devil 'd he want to say that for!"

Melissa said nothing.

"He still up t' th' tavern?"

"I guess he may be."

"Well, I hope he is, anyhow." Whit turned to pick up his rifle. "I guess I'll go 'n talk to him."

"No, Whit! Don't! 'Twon't do any good! He can't hurt us now, Whit!"

"No, I don't guess he can. Still, I'd kind a like my . . ."

Melissa hoped that somehow between here and the m
could dissuade him. They started along . . .

Whit said after a silence, "My letter get through to y
"A letter?" Before Melissa there opened the thought
that would have meant to her.

"Well, I didnt know as 'twould, but I thought I m'
This feller came through there said he was goin' t' Wolf
'n he'd carry it that far—I guess he did maybe, he seemed
like a good, honest feller—but still 'n all Wolfeboro
no more 'n start it. Well, it's no matter. I didn't want you
on account I was late, was all. 'Twas a real pretty letter.
you could a seen it. I put in a power o' work on that letter."

Melissa said something about, well, he was here now.

"What made me late was a fool kind o' business. I'd
know'd better."

"What was it, Whit?"

"Well, I'll tell you about it. You might 's well know
lunkhead I be, I s'pose. I was crossin' this stream—I pu
the letter—'n this rock kind o' turned on me that I had my
on, *'n I started to fall. I know 's well you do what I'd o*
done, o' course. I done it many a time. But this time I didn't
see, like it most always is, the sun was in front of me,
couldn't see nothin' in under the water—it was about up
I guess, and a pretty good current. It's an awful nice stream
there's trouts in it that's as big as your arm. You take a
or two earlier, 'f I'd had a grasshopper—or you take along
sundown, 'f I had a mouse, maybe—"

"*Trouts,*" *Melissa said sagely.* "*If Mr. Potter'd* said it
trouts, now, why, I might a believed him."

"What?"

"Go right ahead: 'If you'd had a mouse . . .' "

He grinned, and then laughed with her. "Oh, well, what I
sayin', when this rock turned underneath me, what I'd o
to've done was to settle down easy. 'Stead o' that, I stepped
den—when I couldn't see nothin—'n my foot took 'n
'tween a couple o' boulders, 'n then I fell over onto it. Well,

on t' th' bank, 'thout gett'n' drownded—'n that seemed like
ssing."

Does to me," said Melissa.

Well, i' 'twas, I c'n tell you. But then I couldn't step on it.
he next thing, I figured, was to get me a crutch for it—'n
I missed my knife, 'n th' wan't anythin' for it but I had to
l in again."

You mean int' th' water?"

I mean int' the water. I didn't like to—I'd had wettin'
ugh—but same time in spite o that, I didn't hanker to go
psin' round 'thout any knife an' only one leg to walk on. I
w the thing had dropped out while I was wallerin' 'n floun-
in' out there in the middle tryin' t' get my foot loose out from
een them two boulders. I knew where the place was, all right,
I went out 'n got it. 'N then I cut me a crutch, 'n sometime the
t day I come into Sandwich, which was where I wrote you
letter. I stayed there with some people—they're awful nice
ople—until I could travel. That's why I was late—like I started
tell you."

"Yes." She was thinking about him with his foot caught in
boulders.

"You ain't angry, Melissa—because I was late, I mean?"

"No, I ain't angry—not now that you're back here. I wan't
gry before that. I only wanted you back here."

"*You* been all right? You look pretty rugged."

"Yes, I been all right."

"Joe ain't bothered you any?"

"Joe? No, he ain't bothered me. He ain't the same as he was,
ough. Joe wants to marry me."

"No!" Whit exclaimed in amazement. "Why, the—"

"Well, I d'know why he shouldn't *want* to."

"*I know why he shouldn't! Joe nor anyone else hain't got any*
all t' come anywhere near t' you."

"How does *he* know I'm promised? You said not t' tell any-
ne."

"Well, you could a kind o' let on to him, couldn't you?"

"I did kind o' let on to him."

"You'd ought to let on to him harder. What did he you? When was it, anyhow? Joe! Why—"

"Last night," said Melissa.

"Last night, eh? Wait—Melissa, you wan't up in th' him!" It was not quite accusation, but it was pretty close t and yet it didn't cover much more than being up in the him.

"No," she said quietly, "I wan't up in the barn with him"

"Where was it, then?"

"'Twas out in th' innyard."

"Out in th' innyard."

"Mr. Potter'd been talkin', 'n when I'd stood all o' that I I c'm out f' some air, 'n Joe come out after me."

"What did he say to you?"

"He asked me to marry him."

"What d'you say to him?"

"Near as I recollect, I said, 'Joe, you go home now'—'n ent home. 'N I lay in the barn on account o' this Mr. had seemed t' fill up th' tavern with what he'd been sayin'. was keeping the tears back; Whit didn't see them.

Whit looked down at the ground.

There seemed to be quite a difference between the way lissa had acted and the way, for a minute or two, he himsel been talking. He didn't want to look up at her.

But when he did so, Melissa was smiling—though she having indifferent success about keeping the tears back.

Whit said, "I—" but he couldn't get any further.

Melissa came to him.

Within the next minute or two, Melissa had told him things really stood with her.

Whit was staggered. He knew he ought to have figured this might be the case. Still, he hadn't. Oh, he'd wondered times, but not any more than that. And now the whole work changed for him. He felt no elation.

Melissa hadn't expected that he'd throw his hat in the air

her, she'd hoped, would he be angry with her—and she could that he wasn't. But he looked terribly solemn. He looked as mn as she had when she'd first contemplated it.

It'll be all right, Whit."

Yes, I know."

I—I'm kind o' glad, Whit. Ain't you?—just a little?"

Oh, I'm glad enough, yes. I got to think what to do, though."

Give over that for a minute. Now look at me, Whit. Tell me 're glad—I'll know if you are or not, so if you ain't, 'twon't yin'. But I want you to say it."

Whit looked at Melissa. He didn't have to say anything. He r glad, and she knew it—and so did he, now he thought of it.

"Well, the first thing, I guess," Whit said to her presently, "is go 'n get married."

"Yes, I guess we had better."

"'N then, after that, question is can you travel?"

"Well, I ain't goin' t' stay here, not if you go away again. And way I feel now, I could travel most anywhere."

"That's about where you're goin' When'll your time be?"

"May," said Melissa, "you'd ought t' know that much."

"Flies'll be bad then, but the weather'll be warmer. You do int to go north, do you?—like we figured we would? I got a ace located, 'n I got a lean-to. I didn't put that in th' letter, use it meant too much writin'. But she's there, and a good one. r if it seems better, you could winter to Sandwich. You do want go?"

"Yes, I do, Whit. I'm ready."

"All right, we'll go, then. I may be wrong, but I think that re'd better. Only risk is, of course, that the river'll freeze. We ot t' go by the river—there ain't no other way for it. A canoe a some luck'll get us to Sandwich. It might be better for you t' vinter in Sandwich. Anyhow, we c'n decide on that after we get here. One way or another, I guess we c'n winter."

"We'll winter."

"Well, *then, that's settled.* It'll take me the rest of t'day tomorrow t' get things t'gether. I got t' get a canoe—I kn

one that I want; belongs t' Peter McDonald over t' Derry—got t' get gear o' one kind 'n other, 'n I got t' get food—t. we won't need a gre' deal, but enough t' be safe with. If weather holds on, I should think we might figure—well, figure t'leave the day after t'morrow. First thing in th' fore the day after t'morrow. Does that suit you all right?"

"Today would be better."

"Month ago 'd been better. It's pretty late in the year now I don't see nothin' else *to* do. We got t' get married, 'n soo we're married we can't tarry t' Kittlef'd."

This was clear to Melissa, and had been all along.

"You know your old man ain't goin' t' take t' this kindly I got 'n idea, maybe, that I'd better tell him—get that pa it settled—'fore we see Mr. Gowan It ain't what you'd call lar for him to go marryin' us without we been published i that kind o' business, so if he's willin' t' do it, least I c'n d meet him halfway when it comes to your father"

"How 'bout your people, Whit?"

"They c'n wait till it's over. Pa wouldn't only complain then get himself drunk, 'n he c'n do that just as well one time another. If he was t' come round with a skinful o' rum while Mr. Gowan was marryin' us, I wouldn't like it. You him lately?—since I been away, I mean? He's about the s ain't he?"

"Yes, he looked to me so"

"Pa don't change a gre' deal. Well—I got t' go up t' th' now, 'n tell your old man that you're about t' get married."

"I want to come with you."

"Well, I d' know now. I was thinkin' that maybe your pa want t' speak freely, 'n it might be some better if I was alo with him. Why don't you stay out round th' barn, or go up your chamber? Wouldn't that be all right? Then after he through with me, we c'n go on down 'n see Mr. Gowan, 'n—well we c'n get married. Why ain't that all right?"

"Yes."

"What's the matter?"

here ain't nothin' the matter—only—only it's happened so k, is all. I—I feel awful happy. Really I do, Whit!"

Twouldn't seem t' me quick if I'd been in your shoes— n' round here 'n waitin' since the end o' last August, 'n no l comin' through, 'n then this other business. High time, is : I'd call it."

Yes. That's true, I suppose. It's because I had all the waitin' it seems so quick now, I guess."

e first looked—and then gazed at her. "My gorry, Melissa," aid almost mistily, "you look awful pretty."

d'know why I shouldn't. This my weddin' day, ain't it?" She ed on him bravely.

Yes, sir, it is"—still gazing at her—"'n mine, too, for that ter." He kissed her again.

Well, you go talk t' Pa—and mind you do th' talkin'!—I'll p to my chamber. I ain't goin' t' be married all over hay, any- —e'en though you did cut it."

I didn't cut much more'n half of it Joe done his share, I s."

Well, it's the half you cut that's stuck to me. Come on, now, can't stand all day talkin' . . . 'n sooner or later, you got t' eat lethin'."

I ain't *terrible hungry*."

No, I ain't either."

Melissa fell silent. They started up toward the tavern.

—as they came to the bridge, she said, "Whit, d' you remem- my mother?"

"Yes, I remember her."

"I—I do, too."

Whit took hold of her hand—and she held on to his firmly.

20 MELISSA WAS going to step into the barn just to see to e feed and the water, and, although Whit said he'd do it for er, she sent him on up to the inn.

He went round to the front door because that was f..
and because it seemed to him somehow to have
it.

When Whit came in the door, Captain had his back to
being busily bent before the cask of West India. "Good r..
said Captain, "you're welcome, I'm sure—though I r
'tis. Wait'll I get this here drawed—man'll be down in
ute—" there was a thumping upstairs "—that's him gettin
boots on. There!" He shut off the spigot, stood up, and t
round—

"Mornin', Captain," Whit said to him.

Captain's hand shook, and lest he should spill any, he s
bowl on the counter. He muttered some exclamation,
said half aloud, "Where in hell 'd you come from?"

"Sandwich—'n round there."

"When 'd you get here?"

"When I come in the door."

"I mean in t' Kittlef'd."

"'Long about sunup. You're the first man that I seen s
yesterday forenoon."

Captain breathed easier. The first shock had passed—th
being so suddenly confronted by a man whom he'd injured f
in front of Captain there stood and awaited him the very b
pleasure of informing this boy that Melissa, by God, was
next thing to married to good old Joe Felipe! Captain
his lips. "Set down your rifle, my boy. You look like y
traveled."

"I been travelin', all right."

"Let me get suthin' for you. You ain't growed up to rum,
you, while you been away?"

"No, I ain't, I guess, Captain."

"Cider?"

"No; it's kind of you, Captain, but I can't stay but a minu
"You got a little packet of fur there. You want me t' lock
it?"

"No, that'll wait. Don't amount t' much anyhow."

No, I can see that. But I'll treat you right on it. It's a little for fur."

Not all kinds, it ain't early. But that ain't no matter. We c'n he fur go till later. What I came about, Captain, is I got ethin' t' tell you."

You don't say!" exclaimed Captain. "Well, now, that's ty." He rubbed his hands on his waistcoat. "Maybe we can even. I got a little small piece o' news that might interest Whit." He smiled after his fashion . . but not wholly nely. It seemed to Captain that Whit had grown quite a lot ger. Captain uncomfortably thought of the letter. Still, when it heard the news, that would take care of Whit all right! d figure she'd jilted him in spite of the letter.

What is it?" Whit asked him.

Tell me yourn," answered Captain, knowing well what it . "Tell me yourn first, and then I'll tell you mine, Whit."

But Reverend Potter, who now had his boots on and was cending the stairway, forewarned of his coming. He came the room, looking sleepy and dirty. "Where's that rum?" he manded.

Right here 'n ready f'r you, Mr. Potter—all drawed and all dy!" Captain stepped briskly and handed it to him.

Potter shuddered and drank it, wiped his mouth on his linen, d held the mug out to Captain. "Draw me another. That's vile m, and you know it But a man's breakfast sets better if he arms up his stomach." He turned to the other man, standing ere with the rifle, and said to him sourly, "Trapper, good orning."

"Mornin'," Whit answered.

Mr. Potter sat down. He chose to be irritated by the man's one of voice, and he looked him all over. "And just who might ou be—if I might inquire?"

"You c'n inquire. My name is Whit Livingston."

"Indeed," Potter said carelessly—and then, "What?" He glanced quickly at Captain and was not much astoni serve that poor Captain was now making faces.

"Livingston here"—Captain did his desperate best—only just gotten in from a long trip t' th' north o' here S you said, Whit. That's some east o' the Grants, ain't it?"

Whit, in response, nodded his head the least bit, though ing his gaze fixed on Potter.

"Three months he's been gone," Captain went on, "an' letter come through from him, 'n then he walks in here."

"I see," Mr. Potter said heavily, "quite a surprise for y—"

"Yes, 'twas," agreed Captain.

Turning to Whit, Mr. Potter said, puzzled, "But—but y not the Livingston *I* know."

"I d' know why I should be; you ain't anyone I know."

Whit's tone and his manner informed Potter and that Whit had been told of what Potter had said of him.

"Captain," said Potter, "you will please introduce me."

"This here's Mr. Potter, Whit," Captain said hopelessly.

"Thank you," said Potter. "And now if you'd kindly bri of those, Captain, perhaps the young man will join me."

"I won't take any, thank you. Who's this Livingston, now? Let's get that out' th' way. I come here to see Ca

It was Captain who marveled at how Whit had grown *and perhaps Whit did a little.*

But the businesslike Potter—who'd never seen Whit be—wasted no time in marveling. "The Livingston I know," answered Whit levelly, "does not exist. The fact is, my good that I used your name once in an attempt to sell land. If I h done you an injury—as your manner implies—I most sincer regret it. May I explain to you?"

"Well, you c'n try, if you don't take too long to it."

"Yes, yes, of course. You have business with Captain. So I, for that matter. Our friend Captain Butler is buying so deeds from me. That is so, isn't it, Captain?"

"It might be," said Captain.

"Very well, then." Mr. Potter now spoke to Whit solely. I have just come from the Grants where I bought considerable land, a portion of which I now contemplate selling. I sought

some last evening to some of your townsmen. I need money, see, to continue my journey."

There ain't a better thing you could spend it for."

I incline to agree with you. Your neighbors, however, were to loosen their purses. Earlier on in the evening I had heard name mentioned. It appeared you had gone north some- during the summer and had not yet returned. No one had rd from you. It was early for trapping, and someone sug- ed that perhaps it might be you had gone pioneering. And eone else said—yes, I know who it was: it was the man they Ensign—said that if you *had* made a pitch, he'd stake his life t you'd picked good land to do it on."

Why'd he say that?" Whit interrupted.

"If I recall," Mr. Potter said slowly, "he intimated that you'd some experience of land that was *not* so good."

He was correct."

Yes. That seemed to be the general opinion. So, when the e came and I was trying to sell land to them, I used what I'd rd It didn't seem serious In all probability, you had settled newhere. And no doubt on good land. So why not next to my d? There's good land next to my land. And it was only of that t I sought to convince them I told them a man named Whit ingston, from Kettleford, had settled on land that was hard by me lots I owned. It seemed at the time an innocent fiction. nd—this may amuse you—I went so far, I confess, as to give u a wife—a most excellent female, let me assure you. You uld scarcely do better yourself, Mr. Livingston. Unless you've ready done so . . ."

"That the whole o' the story?"

"Why, yes—yes, I think so."

"All right. You're a liar. I guess you c'n go now."

"I fear I've offended you."

"Yes, it looks that way, don't it?"

"You have my apologies, young man, of course. If there are any amends I can make, I assure you, you have only to mention them. I am at fault, and I freely confess it."

"Will you please t' get out o' here?"

"Gladly," said Potter. He rose rather stiffly, and facing reached into his pocket.

Whit cradled his rifle—

"Captain Butler," said Potter, "here are the deeds that going to buy from me. Fifteen pounds apiece comes to fort pounds. Bay old tenor, that is. They're very fine deeds. You sell them for twice that, if you put your mind to it, and I have doubt that you will."

"But—"

"Captain Butler, you will observe that young Livingston is not to be trifled with. Please get me the money."

"But *forty-five*—"

"Livingston at the moment is cradling his rifle. The y man does not wish me to say anything further. Do you, Butler?"

"I'll get it," said Captain, and hurried out of the room. forty-five pounds spent on trumpery deeds than a beating f Whit—if Potter should tell him what had become of his

While Captain was gone, neither Potter nor Whit spoke word to each other.

Captain returned and gave Potter the money. Potter cou the money, and gave Captain the deeds. Mr. Potter said, "Th you." He took down his cloak, put that on and his hat, marched to the door. "Well," he said throatily, "I continue journey."

Captain asked plaintively, "You ain't forgetting your sc are you?"

With his thumb on the latch, Mr. Potter replied, "No, I'm Captain Butler. My score here is paid. In fact, I think I've p everyone. Good day to you, landlord." He opened the door. At over his shoulder: "Trapper, good morning—" and perhaps little bit hastily, he closed the door after him. They heard him g tramping round down toward the barn to get his horse out.

"Prob'ly steal everything in the barn," Captain said bitterly. "What is he—a land agent dressed out like a preacher?"

Captain said what he was. Then he trailed off into muttering. He went over and poured out some brandy and drank it. ...nding behind his own counter, he leaned his back comfort...y against one of the casks on the rack, and folded his arms. ...w it was *his* turn. "Well, Whit, what is it? Now we got rid o' ...n, we c'n talk just the two of us. What's on your mind, boy?"

Whit had grounded his rifle. He stood with his long hands ...apped round the barrel, and leaned his weight on it.

"Speak up, my boy!—that is, if you want to talk private. I got ...eeling old Joe may come in here most any minute. I been kind ...expecting of him."

"Well, I'll tell you now, Captain, what I come to say was." He ...lt far more excitement because of the words he would say than ...did because it was Captain to whom he was saying them. "Me...ssa and me is going to get married."

Captain said evenly, "Well, now, Whit, you was right. That's ...ite some piece o' news, ain't it! By God, boy, it is!"

"True, anyhow, Captain."

"Why, o' course, it's true, Whit! You'd ought t' know, hadn't ...ou? Why should I disbelieve it?"

"I d' know as you should, Captain."

"What makes you think that I don't believe it?"

"You ain't sputtered enough."

Captain Butler appeared for a moment about to supply the ...deficiency. But he recovered himself. "No—the way I feel to ...you, Whit, is almighty grateful. 'Twas awful kind in you, Whit, t' take all this trouble t' come round here 'n tell me. I d' know as consid'rin' the way you was brought up that 'twould a entered your head t' come in here 'n *ask* me?"

"No, it didn't."

"'Twouldn't."

"Matter o' that, I ain't askin' you now, Captain. Maybe you noticed."

"You think you ain't, maybe. But let me ask you somethin'! Who's goin' t' marry you to M'lissa without I give permission? And another thing: just how in the hell did you f...

her? Your old man goin' t' give you the mortgage on his pl Or maybe you figured t' hire out mowin'? Wait, though, ju a trapper. Hell, I almost forgot, Whit. I beg your pardon. I there bundle o' rat hides you brought in here with you—wh you get 'em all, anyhow, under somebody's corncrib? I s'pose aim t' trade them for enough t' get married." His tone chan to solicitude "You ain't drunk, are you, boy?—'cause if you r drunk, then I do think you're crazy B'God I could swear n I'm sorry for you. When I tell the town this, they'll go 'n get t' fit a collar t' you, 'n your old man'll take 'n chain you up on the woodshed f' the boys t' make sport of, like that one ov Goffstown We ain't had one t' Kittlef'd—not f' some t now."

Captain summed up in disgusted amazement, "You there 'n tell me you're a-goin' t' marry M'lissa!" He leaned ward, his hands on the counter, and with a fine show of earn ness—almost as though he spoke confidentially—"I never he *nothin'* in my *life* t'—t' come *up* to it!"

"You're doin' better I was afeared back along maybe y didn't believe me Well, I'll say good day, Captain"

"You'll say good day, hell!" Captain responded "You'll s more'n 'good day' afore I finished with you! Don't you be in hurry now! I got somethin' t' say t' you"

"All right, Captain, say it This your small piece o' news, ain' more'n you offered"

"This is my piece o' news—'n I got the proof of it! Tha wanted it You c'n come t' th' weddin'! There, now, how'll th do? 'Twon't cost you a penny, 'n after it's over, I'll stand you treat—'f you c'n get someone t' drink with you Maybe I'd ough t' try to m'self, but I guess I won't, somehow." Whit wasn't feel ing any too steady He'd had about all of this that he wanted.

Not so Captain, who was pleased to feel his rage mounting "You're safe enough, boy! You won't have t' drink with nobody! 'N I c'n tell you right now you ain't goin' t' take part in no wed

My piece o' news is: you ain't goin' t' marry her! How d' like it?"

Why, I d' know, Captain . . . don't seem t' mean much—not'll put the proof onto it."

All right: here's the proof then."

Wait just a minute. The proof'll keep, won't it?"

What's the matter? You scared of it?"

No, I don't think so. But tell me this, Cap'n—" he was beginning to slur his words and speak softly the more he grew gry—"this the same piece o' news you spoke of before, is it—en you said we'd swap even?"

I swapped more'n even! What I'm tellin' you's true!"

'How'd you know, 'fore I told you, that we figured t' marry?"

Fairly caught, Captain was, and he showed it. "Told me herf." Being checked made him surly.

"That's a lie, ain't it, Cap'n?"

Captain leaned toward him. "Don't you call me a liar!"—his ice thin and piping.

"What'd you do with the letter?"

"What the hell do you care what I done with the letter? You t no call to write to her! I know my rights! You thought you uld cheat me! You thought you could take her when I wasn't okin'!"

"You're lookin' now, ain't you? And now I'm goin' t' take er." He turned his head toward the stairs and called upward M lissa!"

Her answer came faintly. "Hold on—I'm a-comin'."

Neither one, for the moment, being in a hurry to speak, they tood there in silence. And they listened together to a sound out of doors . . . the resolute steps of the Reverend's horse as Reverend Potter rode up out of the barnyard, passed under the window, and was crossing the innyard to set out on his journey. And they heard Potter's voice: "Joe, good morning to you."

Captain neglected Joe's answer. But Whit heard it—and it sounded natural enough—maybe a little more cheerful perhaps

than Joe usually was. And Whit heard Joe coming up t
doorway . . .

Captain, who had been busily thinking, "How in hell'd
get up there?" and "How 'd Whit know she was up there?"
saw everything clearly. She must have come back with Joe
wherever they'd been all night, and she'd come in the side
and slipped up to her chamber. He hadn't heard her come
account of Whit's jawing—and as for Whit, more than
he'd only guessed she was up there because he hadn't seen
around any. It made everything whole; it made everything
fect. Captain, in trembling excitement and gripped by
presage of imminent triumph, awaited Joe's entrance.

Joe flung open the door and to whomever the room
contain shouted lustily, "Mornin'!" José Felipe had put in a
night. He had parted from Melissa as a friend and an
That had been in her voice. There was no telling how
might get today with her . . .

He saw Whit standing there, and in friendly amazem
e at him in Portuguese. "Where d' hell do you come from
Joe was everyone's friend today.

"Upcountry," Whit answered. "You look pretty good, Jo

"By God, I feel good! I mow you today, Whit, by God, I
wouldn't catch me! Hey? How is that! Eh?"

"I d' know, Joe . . . near as I recollect, it was you
catched me, wan't it?"

"Only for Ensign," Joe answered with relish, "I'd a cut t
off you! By God, he hit me like—like I don' know how
me!" He put his hand to his jaw. "Yes, sir! T'at day we had
a' right! Didn' we? Capitão, I want a drink. Hot brandy
water. Where is M'lissa?"

"You're a sly dog!" The Captain smiled slowly. "I'd ought
ask *you* that." He saw Whit become motionless.

Joe was not even puzzled. "I'm a sly dog? I know what kind
dog you are!" He told him, and laughed. Captain smiled feeb
"Say," Joe reminded him, "I ask you before, where t' hell
M'lissa?"

Wait'll I get you th' brandy." Captain moved hastily.

›e glanced at Whit to enjoy Captain with him. But even Joe d read in Whit's face that Joe was mistaken: there was no to enjoy. Joe had never been one to ponder a problem un-essarily. He reached out for Captain and swung the little man ıd to him. "T' hell wit' t' brandy! Where is M'lissa?"

aptain's wig was askew. "Upstairs in her chamber! Leave go ıe, will you?"

"Upstairs in her chamber' You sure of it, are you?"

Sart'n, I'm sure of it! Leave go of me, will you!"

Quiet, little old man." Joe straightened his wig for him. ɔw get me t' brandy."

Whit wasn't amused. He'd been a long time away. Joe hadn't d to bully Captain.

"Neat," Joe changed his order . . . and taking the brandy, ınk it off at a swallow. As he set the glass down, he explained the Captain. "See? I don' like any jokes about 'where is lissa?'"

"Joe," Captain assured him, "you ain't goin' t' hear any. If ıre's any jokes goin' round about 'where is M'lissa?' they won't on you, Joe. You'll be the one tellin' 'em. And right here 'n w 's a good time t' begin, Joe. You won't never get nobody ore willin' t' listen t' you tellin' 'where was M'lissa' than what /hit is right now, Joe. Whit has just up 'n told me—and you sten to this, Joe—Whit has just up 'n told me that he's goin' t' arry M'lissa. Where was she last night, Joe?"

Joe had turned round to Whit without hearing the question. oe's arms hung at his sides, or a little before him—and his head was drawn in and lowered.

One look at his face—and Whit shifted his eyes to watching Joe's hands. The instant Joe made a move—for his knife or to close with him—Whit's right hand would go down and he'd strike up with his rifle. He was beginning to wonder what Joe could be waiting for ...

But what Joe had heard from Captain, his fellow

he halo the sun gave her as she stood on the stairs was a gen-
s thing—but of course she couldn't see it.

hat she had seen was Whit—who was lame, hungry, and
—confronted by Joe and about to fight with him. She could
rom Whit's face there was no use trying to stop him—and a
erate anger took hold of Melissa. It was stupid of Whit! If
ught with Joe now, he'd not only be beaten—but what did
t think would become of her wedding? . . . and she could
her shrill little father as he goaded Joe into it. She heard
isely his words.

Whit and her father were both out of her reach. She was
nful of both of them!—a little less so of Joe because he was
-witted. Still, there was some hope that she could get
ugh to Joe. He might answer her truthfully when he
ldn't her father. She said to him, "Well, Joe . . . ?"

—and she saw Joe turn around and gaze dumbly up at her.
spoke to him quietly. "Why don't you tell him, Joe? Did I,
didn't I, do like he says I did?"—and she moved her head
ard her father. It all was as clear as a dream to Melissa.

oe's eyes, at her gesture, went to Captain—and then back to
lissa. Joe knew where he was, and he knew what she'd asked
n. He knew what his answer meant—one way or the other.
'd asked the truth of him. And he meant to give it. But Joe
ked too long at her—at the light in her hair—and before the
und of his voice came, José Felipe was wrung by a yearning
at he couldn't stand up against. There was Melissa—and all
at he knew was to take a step toward her. Out of his thoughts,
e may not have answered untruthfully. "Yes, you was wit' me—
l night," he said brokenly.

In the awfulness of the moment, she stood perfectly still. But
n her eyes there was horror . . .

Whit was the first one to move. He stepped across to Melissa,
nd said to her gently, "You all ready, M'lissa?"—and he held
his hand out to her.

She saw him dimly and put her hand into his. "Yes, I'
ready."

is second. He'd drunk the first one more rapidly, and not ch water. Now and again Captain would look over to Joe still he said nothing. This went on for some time.

's knife clattered down from the lintel. Captain started— what it was, though, and he took a deep breath and drank st of his brandy. But he couldn't stand it to listen to Joe nger. "Give over that bawlin', Joe, will you? For God's What you got t' bawl over? You still got the money."

Joe made no answer. After some minutes, he heaved him-pright, and in a kind of a stagger went out the doorway.

ake the knife with you!" Captain called after him. "Don't it there! Joe!" but Joe had gone now. "Joe!" Captain med....

was all alone now.

FOR AN hour or more, having finished his breakfast, Gowan had sat in the kitchen, his great Bible open on the of his writing chair. This was Lecture Day—Thursday. He'd arranging his sermon . . . but all that he'd written—on a from the almanac—was a dozen citations of chapter and ; he liked to be accurate As for the sermon itself, he'd not ten a word of it. An idea so unformed that he must needs t down in order to hold it wasn't fit yet for preaching. In ding a sermon he used only ideas that were solid and shapen that he knew he could handle That was no more than fair to people before him. They paid him to preach—not to think he pulpit.

So far, for tonight, he had arranged his points carefully from tly to eighthly, and was just about through. Eight were ough. The language was something he never fussed with be-rehand. It would either come or it wouldn't once he was eaching; he had good days and poor days.

Now the summation. He shifted his legs, settled himself in 's chair, and approached it with confidence. . . .

Here and there round the room—and in and out of it, too

his sister was busy. But she hadn't disturbed him. She ... his ways, and he was used to her presence. She was not ... woman.

Mistress Jennifer Gowan had come to do for ... very long after he'd first come to Kettleford. She was o... he was—say, ten years or so, maybe. She was a spinster ... unbending, her hair a hard gray, and her face lined ... People in Kettleford knew this about her: years ago, ... Falmouth, she had been promised to a man who was ... snow, trading down east to Sydney—mate and part ... They'd been properly published and the wedding day fixed ... then he'd gone one more trip—because of the money— ... vessel was lost and never was heard from. Mistress Gowan ... was young then—had persisted in hoping, out of all ... that somehow or other the man was alive and would ... come back to her. She said things like that *had* happened ... when people talked to her, she wouldn't listen. After a time ... let her alone. In Falmouth they knew that when a man was ... off Cape Breton, he was likely to stay lost. The stories ... mostly from parts of the world where the water is warmer.

When she'd first come to Kettelford, various women had ... to be neighborly but she wouldn't let them. For their ... sake, they had tried hard. But no one could expect them to ... trying forever. Mistress Gowan appeared regularly at M... and Lecture and most people spoke to her and she alw... swered. That was the end of it. People were fair: there ... soul who had ever been in the house who didn't say ou... that the place was neat as a pin, and that from what they ... see, she was a pretty good feeder But try to talk to her!

Her brother stirred in his chair; he had finished his ... He leaned his head back and spoke to his sister. "Jenny, ... cat of yours—Nebuchadnezzar?—the one with the waistco... saw him this morning. I called to him, too, but he wouldn't c... to me. How long's he been gone?"

"Must be a week, ain't it? Funny thing, too—all this ... been having. You s'pose he was out in it?"

houldn't think so. He found a place probably." Someone ed at the door. "Who can that be, I wonder?" She was on y to the door.

sat there and listened . . . Whit Livingston, that was!—Ielissa was with him. Mr. Gowan's face, for an instant, was ed and grave. "Bring her to me," he had told Whit last er, "and I'll marry you any time"—and now Whit had ht her. All right: he'd go through with it!—though the lainly forbade it. Still, it was he who'd be punished, not and Melissa. Closing his Bible, he got up to greet them. If d only let him have time, he might be able to do something ike the thing legal . . .

e was glad to see Whit, and relieved he was home again. t appeared older.

nd as for Melissa!—Mr. Gowan bowed to her, noting the and the apron and stockings, and seeing most clearly Melis- expression: "This is the hour in which I'm to be married." t her to wait?" he thought to himself. "Ask her to wait three s to be published?—after three months of waiting that brought her this moment? Tell her to bring me a written ficate from the clerk of the town that the match is approved ier father?"

Well," he said to them both, "I guess there's no question as hat you have come for . . . ?"

Whit grinned in response. "No, I guess there ain't, Mr. wan."

Melissa smiled happily.

The minister looked from one to the other. He was proud of em both. "I'm glad you have come," he said.

They had no answer.

"Now, then, first of all: have you had any breakfast?"

Neither one would confess. But from the way the girl looked Whit, Mr. Gowan was certain that Whit hadn't had any. Whit," he demanded, "has she had any breakfast?"

"Well, I couldn't say, Mr. Gowan—but not since I seen her."

"And you haven't either. Jenny—" She'd vanished. "Gone

look for her cat. I'll go and speak to her. You two stay Whit, poke up the fire." He went out after his sister.

Whit rocked the back log, and turned over tl keeps a nice fire."

"Whit, have I got t' eat breakfast?"

"Looks like it, yes." He stood up with his back to

"Are you happy?" she asked, standing before him.

"Certain, I'm happy!"—spreading his hands to the hea fire. "I d' know as 'twould make me unhappy to eat, though

"Kiss me!"

"In a minister's house?"—and he kissed her.

"Here they come!" said Melissa.

Mistress Jennifer Gowan, having already spoken to W and Melissa, saw no need to do so again. She set to work to get ready some breakfast. To Melissa's offer of help, Mr Gowan replied, "I guess I c'n do it. I know where things b ought to, 't any rate: I just put 'em away." So Melissa sat and watched the brisk setting forth of more food than the a would put on for four men. This was no shilling breakfast. S fine-looking butter, and a wide wedge of cheese—not this s mer's, last summer's—maple syrup, molasses, and strawb preserves: these went onto the table. A platter of johnny was set on the hob to take the chill out of it. Into the fry p rubbed first with salt pork, she cut some small bricks of c hasty pudding—and then more salt pork in good liberal sl After arranging the pan over the fire, she went out to draw c

Whit, too, had been watching . . . and giving half hea answers to the questions Mr. Gowan was asking him.

Returned from the woodshed, Mistress Gowan had brou with her a gallon of cider and a couple of eels that had b scheduled for supper.

When Whit saw the eels, his host couldn't help asking, "Y like eels, do you, Whit?"

"I d' know as there's anything a man thinks of oftener w he's where there ain't any."

that! No eels where you've been?"

idn't see any." He followed these with his eyes. "You take Sandwich, ten bushel o' wheat'll buy one o' salt. But for mess of eels, I d' know what I'd have given—if I'd 've had ve, I mean."

stress Gowan took the pan from the fire and emptied the asty pudding and pork onto a plate on the table. She fixed ls in the pan.

good many hold," Whit volunteered, "that a really nice eel best thing there is comes out of the river. I d' know but e right . . ."

ese here," Mistress Gowan could not avoid saying, "ain't as they might be." She set the pan on the fire.

hit remarked thoughtfully, "If I'd had about half of the oil em fellers t' put onto my ankle, I might a gotten here ir."

wish't you'd had a kag of it" came from Melissa.

istress Jennifer said to her brother, "I guess them'll be ready he's ready to eat them."

thanked her, and told Whit to come up to the table. "Me- you, too. You can eat with the men today. You won't mind, ss, will you?"

elissa said truthfully that she'd rather wait.

listress Gowan, listening, approved of this stand . . . and further approved when, Mr. Gowan insisting, Melissa sat n: the girl knew enough to do what she was told, anyhow. he minister then asked a blessing . . . the first time in their s that either Whit or Melissa had ever heard *that* done! They it down to an excusable quirk—it probably came from his ng a minister.

"All right, Whit, begin!" Mr. Gowan invited. And Whit rted in. Melissa, after a fashion, made out to eat also.

There was no conversation. The minister had removed to his air by the fire, and his sister stood round and watched Whit his eating. She hadn't seen anyone who really could eat since e'd left the salt water and come inland to Kettleford. C

the other things, Whit ate both of the eels and drank of the cider. By the time he had finished, Mistress Gowan was so far won over as to give her permission when lissa respectfully offered to help her wash up.

Mr. Gowan ignored the fact that Whit now was was bent upon talking. He told Whit to come and sit the bench by the fire, and he began putting more They were, for the most part, things having to do wi three or four hours.

No, Whit admitted, Melissa hadn't expected him. He'd her a letter, but it had gone astray somewhere. (He had could do to answer the minister accurately, his head was thickening with his great need of sleep.)

"You know, Whit, last night," Melissa put in, "when th Potter come in t' th' innyard, the first thing I thought maybe he's got a letter."

Whit's mind revolved slowly. "Well, the way it turned he brought word of me, anyhow,—or he claimed that he

" 'Mr. Potter'?" Mr. Gowan inquired—and he kept on ing. Whit wasn't able to pick and choose items. Nor was to defend against questions. He worked through the story: what Mr. Potter had said in the tavern last evening how Mr. Potter had made explanation this morning. Whit know when the story was ended. He went doggedly on Mr. Potter's selling some deeds to Melissa's old man—and Captain had paid, even though it hurt Captain to pay more anyone. Then Mr. Potter had gone.

"Yes. I heard him ride by here. What happened then, Whi

"I guess Joe come in, near as I c'n remember." Whit yaw "There, now, I hadn't ought to be sleepy. Night before

"Let's keep to this morning. 'Joe came in.' Then what?"

From the other side of the room, Melissa came over. She watching Whit . . .

Whit was earnestly trying to do what Mr. Gowan requir to recollect what had happened and to tell it all straight.

Gowan said nothing at all to Melissa. But he knew she here.

hit struggled on. He hoped Mr. Gowan would leave him as soon as he'd finished. He would go to sleep then.

was hard work to remember. The outside of his head seemed ess in on his brains . . . but his belly felt good. If he could let go, he could go to sleep now . . .

ey watched his eyes closing.

. 'n then Captain said that I couldn't marry her because all st night she'd been with the Portygee. I d' know why he it—it seemed awful silly. 'N then there was M'lissa—" His now were closed. They both saw him smile. "—standin' on the stairway. She looked awful pretty! 'N so I said to her, ssa, you ready?' 'n she was ready all right—'n so we walked o' there . . . out o' there . . . 'n Joe never done nothin'—'n—'n ed—in the road . . ." That was the best he could do. He had n asleep.

fter a moment, the minister looked at Melissa. And she ed at him.

He felt that he wanted to say something to her. But Whit had ady put it much better than he could: I d' know why he said it seemed awful silly. So Mr. Gowan said nothing. He looked k at Whit.

"He's been travelin' all night," Melissa explained; "all day 'n night."

"Yes."

Whit was sound asleep now. "Jenny," Mr. Gowan said, over shoulder, "I'm going up to the tavern. If Ensign should come re to the house looking for me, tell him to wait for me. Tell m to wait here until I get back. Anyone else, you can send them way—you and Ensign between you, I guess you can, anyhow."

"Dinner?" she asked.

"If I'm not here in time, you can give it to Ensign."

Mistress Jennifer sniffed.

Mr. Gowan stood up. "Now, then, Whit, I'll fix you up." H

he'd be forever debarred from marrying anyone. In addi- o that, Captain could sue him—though there'd not be much o satisfy judgment once the fine had been paid!

oomily Gowan held on for the tavern. . . .

itler . . . well, yes, he thought he might handle Butler. Be- it certainly looked as though Captain Butler—for reasons own—had been trying to fix things so that no one but Joe d marry Melissa. A suggestion to Captain that the town dn't like that—most people believing Joe was more or less sh—might have some effect. In fact, the minister thought, own would like it so little that he was probably justified in ing to Captain of tar and of feathers. . . . Yes, Captain's con- might well be obtainable.

here was still the town, though The town would be difficult; e was no getting round it The town knew the law, too: that arriage be published three times in advance. That was to give h opportunity to object if they wanted to. In this instance, of se, no one would want to object—Whit and Melissa being well regarded But let Reverend Gowan—thus ran his ghts—ignore the town's *right* to object if it wanted to— right there'd be the end of his Kettleford ministry!

Why on earth had he promised Melissa "this evening"! There no use talking that way he knew well enough.

It was only a little way now to the tavern. All right: Butler —he rather relished this interview—and with that out of way, he'd have his mind free to tackle the town.

Mr. Gowan raised up his head and took a deep breath of the orning. He'd been too busy thinking to notice before what a e morning it was!

22

EARLY THAT evening the crowd round the door of the ew meeting house was twice what it had been on Lecture Nights recently. The people stood around, visiting. It wasn't much warmer inside the building, and out here they could talk t was fine overhead and frozen dry underfoot. "Is this

night Lecture," David Gillmor's voice quavered, "or is it a baitin'? I ain't seen so many in one place t'gether since Trainin' Day. My soul 'n body, if there ain't t' Captain! makes it complete. Hi, there, Captain! You treatin'?"

"Evenin', David," said Captain, and took sanctuary in the church building.

"You say 'treat' t' that man," David remarked, "'n he'll into a hole j' like a woodchuck."

"You've shot at him too often."

"Well, I ain't never hit him!"

William Cauldwell asked, "What is it, Lawrence? You what's the excitement?"

"No more than you do," Murphy responded. "What b you here, David?"

"Why shouldn't I be here? Can't I come t' Lecture?"

"You ain't in six months."

"All the more reason!" said David triumphantly.

"The truth is, ain't it, David," drawled old Matthew "*someone told you there was goin' t' be votin'?"*

"That's what I heard," said two or three others.

"What on?" someone asked.

No one answered immediately.

"What's the difference?" said David. "Where there's there's treatin'—sooner or later. That's why I come. The o' you fellers—that ain't here out o' habit, like Schoolmaster —come out o' spite: so's there wouldn't no one outvote ȳ don't care what it's on—no more'n I do."

This was close enough to the truth so that all of them la

"A Presbyterian," another observed, "'d ruther vote 'a anytime."

"They ain't so bad as the Congregationals, though."

"Maybe they ain't but they ain't very far from it."

"Way it is in a Congregational church, even the mini votes. He's got a vote just the same as the rest of 'em."

"How do you know? You ain't never been one"

"No, but my woman was before she changed over."

he didn't vote, did she?"

ell, no, she's a woman."

heard this morning," said Cauldwell to Murphy, "that Whit igston's back. I heard he'd been t' th' tavern and called that Potter—right to his face, mind you!—called him a liar. I l Potter admitted it. You know who told me? Captain elf did."

'es, he told me, too."

N I said to Captain, Potter had better admit it. I knowed last night that the man was a liar—soon as he spoke."

Did you?"

iatt'n I knowed it! But I didn't say nothin'—maybe you ted. Give the man enough rope, I says t' myself, 'n he'll hang self on it."

hey had all heard the story of Whit's meeting with Potter. day long, Captain Butler'd recited it—like a piece that he'd hed—to every man who'd come in there.

Whit ain't the kind"—it was Murphy's opinion—"t' take ve with a woman 'thout he hadn't married her."

There was general agreement.

Where is Whit?" asked Thett. "Has anyone seen him?"

No one answered. They'd do that to Thett sometimes; it kept n in his place.

Mistress Gowan appeared out of the darkness, marching aight for the door.

"Evenin', Mis' Gowan," Murphy said to her pleasantly.

She cocked her head round like a tall, skinny bird. "Who's at? Lawrence Murphy? Why, good evenin' t' you, sir. Nice enin', ain't it?"

"Yes, ma'am, it is that," Murphy managed to answer.

—and she kept on her way.

The men gaped. That was more words than Mistress Jennife Gowan had ever said at one time since she first came to Kettle ord!—and before they'd recovered, Mr. Gowan loomed up. . .

Now, ordinarily, the minister'd stop, speak to this one an hat one. . . .

Tonight he stalked through the crowd as though
there.

An odd silence came on them, as of children rebuked,
recognized it.) They moved toward the door....

Inside the church, Mr. Gowan sat in his chair—
over them, but, as before, not appearing to see them
settled themselves. When the bustle and coughing had
to nothing, they heard as they always did the door of
closed. They waited for the minister to rise and com

Then they heard the door opened again. No one qu
to turn clean around to see who it was . . . but they
steps sounded like a man and a woman. They came up
It was Whit and Melissa.

Every wife in the church glanced round at her
most of the husbands declined to confess to the
interest that throbbed in the females. The men though
own thoughts They thought that Melissa, putting
a fine-looking girl. They were pleased to see for themsel
they'd already heard: that Whit had gotten back
evidence before them that Whit, upon his return, hadn't
much time, they found mildly amusing. They wondered
Whit had managed Captain; understood now why Whit
stood up to Potter; and most of them wondered how Whit
going to support her. It was this latter question made them
of Whit's father. And they saw that old Tom was on han
night, too. Whit had come a long ways since that time
tavern. And old Tom had progressed—but in the other dire
Tom looked worse than ever.

The women all wished that Lecture was over. A sudde
trothal awaiting discussion made the hour seem endless.

Straight, stiff, and in black, Mistress Jennifer Gowan was
with excitement. Melissa was wearing an assortment of ite
which, one after another, Mistress Gowan had persuaded
They were lovely things, too—made for Mistress Jennifer's
ding. Toward midafternoon, she had said to herself, "T
meant for a wedding—and that's what they'll be used for.

back on 'em: I'm doin' right by 'em! It's what they were ; for." Since that moment, whenever she'd realized that ings were no longer up there on the shelf in her closet, felt, for some reason, this—well, sort of excitement: she ke talking to people.

lissa was radiant. Mr. Gowan had said to her, "One way or er, I'm going to try to arrange it for right after Lecture." It e who'd suggested she and Whit sit together—he'd like to re, he said, as much of custom as possible.

ly Whit was unhappy. Not even his pride in Melissa could him feel comfortable—here in front of them all.

ter Whit and Melissa had seated themselves, Mr. Gowan forward—and began just as usual. In nothing he said, in no of his voice was there any sign whatsoever of anything out e ordinary.

hen he came to the notices, he read out the banns, and he to the people, "Following Lecture tonight, I want you to in. There are one or two things that I wish to discuss with

hen he preached them the sermon that he had prepared for —though it suited his purpose to finish with fifthly. By time they were restless, though not yet resentful.

he service concluded, he gave them no chance to relax into spering. But with a tangible pause and some change in his nner, he made the transition to secular matters.

"I speak now to the town," he said, "not to the church." And h those words he conceded to them the authority in whatever ght follow. There was a visible stir as they settled themselves h judicial air in more comfortable postures. They paid the sest attention.

"Here tonight," he went on, "you have heard me read out the nns for two of your people. Under the law of this province, ose banns must be published at three separate Meetings be- re the law will assume that I have your consent to marry these ople. I must have, also, their parents' consent."

"If I break the law—if I marry two of your people w

your consent and the consent of their parents—I becom[e sub-]
ject to fine, as well as liable to suit. But—mark you this
marriage still holds. The law seeks to give you control over
The law does not give you control over them.

"They may be married by some other minister, provided they
have permission of his Majesty's Governor—which, as you
know, is not infrequently granted. Indeed, they may achieve
married estate—so far as the law is concerned—without
minister. In New Hampshire Province, any two people li[ving]
together as though they were married, are just as much mar[ried]
in the eyes of the law, as though they'd *been* married.

"That, I say, is the law—think what I may of it.

"We come now to apply it. Whitfield and Melissa wish
marry them. Under the law, I must have your permission.
weeks, the law gives you, in which to make up your mind

He spoke not at all humbly. "I ask your approval sooner
that. I believe—and assure you—that in that way alone
avoid for them unwonted hardship. With your approval, I
to join together in marriage Whitfield and Melissa before
and this company as now gathered together.

"You have the right to say no. I need not remind you
where there is right, there is responsibility also. What is
pleasure?"

They appeared very grave.

The minister waited....

Nathaniel Thett, young and earnest, got to his feet. "I sh[ould]
like to ask, Mr. Gowan, about the right to be heard of those
are absent."

Lawrence Murphy, sitting up front, was seen to look
the church. "Them that ain't here," Lawrence said audibly
mostly the Portygee."

There was considerable amusement—and Thett chose to
down again.

David Gillmor got up. "From what you say, Mr. Gowan, loo[ks]
like t' me that there ain't any use f'r us t' go further until

from Captain. If Captain says 'no,' there's 'n end on 't, ain't

urphy leaned toward his wife so as to whisper, "That old d kiss a cow's rump f't a noggin o' brandy."

e reproved him.

Gowan turned squarely to Captain. "Eliphalet Butler—" he paused somewhat pointedly until Captain stood up—"do give your consent to my performing this marriage between daughter Melissa and Whitfield Livingston of Kettleford?"

here was dead silence. Everyone in the place, except Whit Melissa, was looking at Captain.

aptain, however, was looking at the minister. . . .

Dr—" Mr. Gowan said

do," answered Captain.

lo one thought of Tom Livingston.

William Cauldwell arose; his love of talking was proof against thing. "Sir, and this meeting Like Mr. Gowan has said, re there's a right, there is responsibility. That means, f't one ig, that it's up t' us t' be fair an' t' use our best judgment tods Whit and this woman I think we will. But it looks t' me, like our responsibility went further 'n that.

Now I don't say there is—but I say there *could* be—folks side o' Kettleford who might have some interest, one way or other, in these two gettin' married. It might even be that such me as I speak of was at some distance from Kettleford. If we down the time between 'publish' and marry,' we cut that pera out of a chance to object. Oh, yes, we c'n do it; we got the thority. But do we *want* t' do it?" Mr. Cauldwell sat down.

. . . and the story of Whit's having taken a woman somewhere the north seemed to hang in the atmosphere . . .

They were uncomfortable under it; they didn't like it. But here it was, all the same. And no one wanted to speak.

Mr. Gowan perceived that he was facing defeat. Yet he'd gone s far as he dared in trying to run things. Any move he made ow, and they'd turn against him.

Zebulon Porter, disliking Cauldwell, sought a fresh ch subject. Well-intentioned and innocent, Zebulon cheer quired, "I'd like to ask, Mr. Gowan, what is the nature d here now 'hardships'?—that you said you'd like t' get them?"

Whit thought to himself, "I've stood all of this that I'm mind to."

He rose and faced Porter. "I've made me a pitch just Sandwich. If you know where that is, you know that t' ge you go up th' river. That means a canoe. *If I'm goin' t'* canoe full o' gear 'n a woman up Merrimack River in th o' November, I want t' git started. I *got* t' get started! Git stream, *I got t' use th' slack water* That freezes first. Any now, when there ain't too much wind, she'll begin t' cru New ice'll slit a canoe open right at the waterline. If she's down good 'n movin' 't all, it'll lay her wide open. That pu in th' river with th' gear 'n the woman. As to what Mr here means by 'unwanted' hardship, I couldn't tell you. Fa know, there ain't any other kind But flounderin' round a rimack River with ice 'n gear 'n a woman 'n a stove-up more hardship than I want. Does that answer your qu He was angrier now than he had been when he started.

Porter said, *"Yes, it does."* Porter was pleased. Whi pleaded his case better than Porter had thought he could.

Lawrence Murphy said quietly, "Why can't you go over"

"Because I ain't got any oxen." And then Whit turn Cauldwell. "I told Mr. Potter this mornin' up t' th' tavern th was a liar. *I thought that was sufficient.* Is it, or ain't it?"

"It is for me, Whit."

"Is it for the rest of ye?"

"Yes," a man growled—and more of them joined him.

Whit, not visibly mollified, sat down again.

Mr. Gowan saw fit to call on Melissa.

She rose when he spoke to her—and she stood very sti "According to custom when banns have been read,

explained by way of easing it for her, "I ask you, Melissa, stand forth before this congregation."

issa had expected that Whit would be at her side.

hitfield Livingston," the minister said to the people, "has faced you." And to Melissa, "Please turn around."

issa turned round. She saw the faces distinctly—there o many!—but there was no one she knew. She had seen aces before—but then they'd been people. They were not now. They were just staring faces . . . without any names m. She was alone, confronting these faces—she couldn't feel her legs under her holding her up. Yet she didn't

it, who was sitting there watching her, did what he had to stood up beside her, and he took hold of her arm. Melissa up at him—

ell; Gavin Gowan—" Mistress Jennifer's voice was high mpatient—"what are you waitin' for now?"

Gowan was startled—

ple broke into laughter. Out of the laughter, somebody "Now's the time, Mr Gowan!" And another man, "Aye! for you, Mistress Jenny!"

er the tumult, Ensign Lord roared, "All in favor, say aye!" ey rocked the church with it.

a quiet—by contrast more notable—the minister married . They stood before him and he read from his Bible those he had chosen, knowing Whit and Melissa. There was no l of question and answer, no admonition. There were only Old Testament words which he wakened.

hit and Melissa acknowledged each other as husband and

The minister prayed for them. . . .

. . . Amen," he finished.

Amen," said the people.

Melissa turned Whit about and they walked down the aisle

The door opened for them . . . and the night outside w them.

Someone stepped up to Whit. It was Ensi opened the door for them. "Mr. Gowan says, Whit, t' go t' his place. I guess likely the rest of 'em 'll go up t' th He says you c'n do as you like, o' course—but you know tavern's like after a weddin'."

"M'lissa—?" Whit asked her.

"I d' want t' go back, Whit! I come away from there w this mornin'."

"Well, I d' know but I feel th' same way." And to Ensign Mr. Gowan we take it kind of him, will you? C'm on, M'lis

"My cloak's in the church."

"I'll git it," said Ensign. "You wait down the road a p other side o' that elm tree."

They slipped away, then . .

Ensign caught up with them before they'd got to the el *He gave Melissa her cloak*

"G' night, Whit," he said, " 'n good night to you, Mis'es ingston."

He hurried back to join up with the others. Ensign kne what the tavern would be after a wedding. And tonight swallow at Captain's expense! He couldn't escape it' E spoke aloud in the darkness: "I bet that old David has got a'ready!"

Whit and Melissa walked down the road. The sound of people faded behind them. They passed two or three h with light in the windows—dim light, from the fire—and head in the darkness, thin-white and unreal, the smoke from chimneys These were the houses of the good people of K ford. They were warm houses.

Whit struggled to speak. "M'lissa, I'm sorry I ain't go place t' take you."

"But you will have."

"Yes, I will have."

:n she stopped in the road, and she put her hands up to
'Whit, I don't care!—not so long as you take me."
hit couldn't answer. He drew her to him.
ssing Joe's little house, they saw it was dark, no light in the
ow, no smoke from the chimney. Neither one spoke of it.
sa pulled her cloak tighter round her.
ou think that tomorrow, Whit, we c'n get started?"
omorrow or next day, I shouldn't wonder. No later than

e rest of the way, Whit holding her hand, she went forward
ence.

PART TWO

The River ✍ *1769-1770*

WHIT SAID to Melissa, "Well, now we got started, next
; is t' git there"
hey were out on the river, in the long, quiet reach where the
r spreads out above the falls at the fishing place. The mist of
morning as it rose from the water was thin now and wispy,
the sun was beginning to narrow the shadow that lay along
east bank. There was almost no wind, what there was was
thwesterly. It was yet a little too early for the day to declare
lf, but everything pointed to its being a good one.
Underneath all the things that he had on his mind, Whit
ild feel a great uplift. Melissa was with him. The town was
hind them.
He was paddling easy, as a man is apt to do generally at the
rt of a day or a journey. The blade of his paddle would join
th the water, they'd be together a moment, and then be apar
ain—very much the same way that a man and a woman

in a figure, go through it together, and cast off at th
to join again in a moment, carried along and
music. The firmness of the water, he could feel in his
his arms, and his shoulders. It was gentle and sure;
it. He was at one with what he was doing.

This was a birch canoe, high at each end and
of it. It was easily ripped but it was easily
brought along enough pitch to pretty nearly build
one.

By and large, Whit was hopeful. *Now in the*
appeared a good chance *that* what lay ahead might
pretty well for them.

It seemed to Whit, as he thought of it, that he was prob
fortunate a man as you'd be likely to find if you were to
look for one. He was going into the woods and Melissa
him. You couldn't beat that!

He was aware of the happiness in him. Joy he had
and here and there laughter. This was deeper and gentle
was a feeling a man could remember and brace agains
time, when he was pressed hard, and know it wouldn't
with him.

Plenty of men can say "Then, I was happy." Whit
of them. He knew his happiness at the time when he had

Melissa was with him

That was the main thing. Of course, on the other hand
were going to run into hardship and certainly danger. But
ters of hardship and items of danger his mind kept in
places. They didn't trouble him any beforehand. *He* kn
was prudent, and he counted that in his favor. *He* als
thankful that he'd have *himself to depend on* and no othe
around him to worrit him. He liked it that way; it gave
chance, when something went wrong, to work it out by hi

He didn't look to Melissa for help on the journey.
wasn't much she could do, really, that he wasn't accusto
doing himself and that he didn't have an idea he *could* do
than she could. The job right ahead of *him* was to get

ich. He'd manage. There'd be a good many places where ave to go easy—where once he'd have poled that this time st carry—but he didn't mind that. If they'd been coming tream, though, there were one or two runs he'd have hated s.

e sound of the falls was not faint, but forgotten. There were falls ahead, but they couldn't hear them yet.

was keeping along at the edge of the sunlight, because he see that she wanted the sunlight. If he'd been alone, he'd stayed closer in—more out of the current and where he see better. But here in the reach there wasn't much current hey had enough to eat with them so that they didn't need to hything. None the less, all along—because he couldn't help ie'd been watching both banks for anything stirring. Two uash and a mink were all he'd seen so far, and he hadn't ght them worth calling to Melissa's attention. A deer would ice, though—feeding about in a shallow place at the edge of lders, lifting its feet as dainty as could be, a deer was a g that belonged to the riverbank—this time in the morning. like Melissa to see one; he thought it would pleasure her. e was up in the bow and she had her back to him, the hood er cloak and her small shoulders showing over the top of baggage he'd fixed there to make a back for her.

he sun coming warmer, Melissa pushed her hood back, ed up her head and shook it a trifle, and it riffled her hair. t was too much for Whit; it always was when she did that. couldn't restrain himself: his foundation of happiness med so very reliable that he couldn't bear not to add to it ne exultation. He grinned and he said to her, "This is pretty od, ain't it?"

"Yes," said Melissa.

The wind—somewhere between them and the falls at the fish-g place—had wavered and shifted, and the noise of the falls s much less than it had been. "Wind's shifted," he thought. Must be more out th' west." He didn't say anything.

Melissa had made up her mind to try to sit motionless. And it

wasn't nearly so irksome as she'd thought it would be. was beginning to wonder if there wasn't some way straighten her legs out. There didn't seem to be any, it off until later. The freedom all round her—and it all to her—was too insistently there for her to think of else.

Here the river was wide enough so that they were no in by the banks, but were raised up instead so that she off into the country. The things that she looked away than the things that Whit looked for. She looked the west bank—a bare, tan-colored line—and then went be it. The Uncannunucs were plain, but it was not the same tain. She knew what it was because it couldn't be anything but this side of the mountain resembled in no way the the mountain that she'd always known. To have the Unca nucs changed round made it seem all the more a strange and country in which she was traveling. This indeed was a She was farther now from the tavern than she'd ever been life. "How far we come, Whit, would you say, altogether?"

He was slow to answer. "Fourteen mile, I guess, maybe."

She heard his voice as his own but it was not the way he generally. She heard him distinctly—but if she'd been farther from him she couldn't have heard him at all. And it seem a short answer. Perhaps, in addition to not being al to move about any, she wasn't supposed to speak either. flushed with resentment, made a wry face, and resolved to quiet.

Whit hadn't meant to rebuke her. He'd spoken loud enou for her to hear what he said, and he'd answered her question didn't enter his head at the moment that she'd expect any than that. Chatter, during the daytime when he was out on river or going along in the woods, wasn't natural to him wasn't alone that he was afraid of frightening game—the that was part of it, certainly—but he was at work, he was Everything that he saw he was tucking away; he might ne sometime. True, he didn't expect to come this way aga

away, anyhow—but to see and remember was part of his ess.

r example: Melissa saw an old blasted pine on the bank e river. She noticed a brook that made into the river, and s around it. She enjoyed seeing these things . . . and passed o the next thing. She could see fifty pines and a dozen of ks—and not have them take up her mind so that she dn't talk to her husband. After all, this was her wedding tour. night, Whit had been close to her. She couldn't see why, all sudden, he wanted to shut her out so completely.

Whit saw the same things—the pine tree, and so on. And if e evening next April a man that he took to were to say to , "How is it for otter in that part of the country?" Whit ld answer him easily, 'Well, I come up the river the first k in November, and there was only one place that I see any —that is, below Hooksett. There's a little brook there that kes in from the east—lines up with an old blasted pine on the t bank and the top of the mountain. 'Tain't a great ways ve Namoskeag Falls. I see a run there, but it looked like an one. Hadn't been used since the forepart th' summer, I uldn't say—sticks on it, and so on. I didn't see no other sign in otter in the whole o' that reach."

Two or three minutes later, Whit began wondering if she ught he'd been short with her He decided that maybe she ght have. "Ten mile from th' tavern, most of them call it, to falls at th' fishin' place. Where we lay out last night was a ort piece above there, 'n we come three mile this mornin'. I n't a great hand t' cipher, but fourteen is right, ain't it?"

She forgave him. "Fourteen'll do, but I wish it was fifteen ems to me ev'ry mile is so much t' th' good."

Whit was distressed. "I was afeard that you mightn't take t"

"Take to it'! Whit! I love every minute. I didn't mean th ss we got left. I meant the more that we been."

"Oh. Well, we got some ways t' go yet."

"Not too much t' suit me."

"'N 'twon't all be like this."

"Couldn't be any better!"

"It ain't, I c'n tell you. Right along here's th' best par river for upstream. You better take comfort while you ge chance. You settin' easy? You ain't cramped up too much, you?"

"Not now, I ain't, no. My legs maybe, later."

"Come time t' bate, you c'n get out 'n stretch 'em. You d want t' stop now, do you?"

"No."

"It's quite a trick t' set still. You never had any practice."

"Not a gre' deal. 'N you know I can't get over it: this tim th' mornin', 'n here I am *settin'*."

He chuckled. "You could knit, I s'pose maybe, 'f you'd be happier."

"No, I ain't goin' to—'n I couldn't be any happier. I c'n I around me; I c'n see away off! Everything's new to me, ev thing's open. The way I feel now don't depend on my leg ain't cramped up a mite. Everywhere that I look, it's like I c fly there. You know what I mean?"

"Yes." She was through with the tavern; that was why felt that way. He had never, himself, felt as though he coul but it seemed a reasonable feeling for Melissa to have; it wa that became her.

"I d'know," she said humbly, "bein' shut o' th' tavern, I sp is part of it."

"Be enough, I should think."

"Yes. I c'n remember when it seemed like it would be. I us t' want t' run off. But he'd have sent after me. 'N he'd have ma it worse for me when he got me back there. He could do it!"

"Well, he can't send after you this time."

"No, but I wish't he would. You know what I'd say to 'e I'd tell 'em the truth. 'Who?' I'd say to 'em. 'Who? That feller's daughter? No, she ain't round here. I'm Whit L ingston's wife.'"

"He won't send after you."

What good would it do him! That *is* the truth, Whit. I ain't ame person."

Well, you'd ought t' know."

Certain, I know."

'Whoever you be, I aim t' hang on t' you."

You ain't *got* t' hang on t' me! You don't see what I mean. at's who I *am*, Whit. Bein' married t' you is more part o' me w than—well, than an arm or a leg, or that my hair is yellow, what my face looks like. *Who* I am is what matters. I'm mard t' you, that's who I am. Them other things is just things that rought along with me. They used t' belong t' who I was once. w they belong t' who I am now. But they ain't *who* I am. You what I mean?"

"Maybe. I'm glad you brought 'em along, though. I'm glad u brought your hair. You ain't forgot nothin' that we'd ought go back for?—like a hand or a foot or your stummick, or thin'?"

"There ain't nothin' there that we got t' go back for."

Whit paddled in silence.

"'Nother thing is," she said after a moment, "when you didn't me back—'n one time or another I thought maybe you ouldn't—when I looked ahead, I—I was afeard, Whit—when looked ahead 'n see next spring a-comin'. Nearer 'n nearer . . ."

"Yes. Well—"

"But I ain't afeard now! I'll be glad when it's May."

"Good."

"You take 'n change a thing round from a thing you're afraid f to a thing you want t' have happen—that you can't hardly vait for—'n it makes quite a difference."

"I should think t' 'twould, yes."

"Settin' here now, I like facin' frontward. I c'n look ahead now. What's near by 'n what's further all looks awful good t' me. Time was, when it didn't—I c'n remember."

"'Tain't a week ago yet."

"Not by days, it ain't, maybe."

"M'lissa, I want t' tell you—'twon't do no good

like t' tell you—that if I'd ever have knowed things be with you how they are now as soon as they was, I'd a *it that we got married somehow afore I went away.* I it. I'm awful sorry."

"*I didn't know either. 'N I ain't a mite sorry. I got* '*n* while you was away, of what it was worth t' be married t' you."

"*Value you set on it may go off somewhat 'fore you get through* with it."

"*I don't think it.*"

For perhaps three hundred yards, neither one of them spoke.

Then Whit said, "I didn't tell you. While I was to Jonas's their agent come by—the agent, I mean, for the Tamworth Proprietors. They own the whole township, the Proprietors do, same as anywhere else—that is to say, a new township that ain't been settled yet. Well, he stopped by at Jonas's while I was there. ' Dan'l Beede was with him, and Jonas was there, and we agreed on a bargain. I mean the agent and me did. Beede writes a fair hand, and he set her all down. I c'n show you the paper when we get to Sandwich. I left it to Jonas's, hid away safe. He's got a little place under the hearth. You could put a piece of it in there and then burn down the whole house, and 'twouldn't be melted—or not very much."

"What does it say?—the paper, I mean."

"It don't say only what we did—the agent and me—but it don't sound quite the same, 'n you got to study it out. Still, that is the way with most papers, I guess."

"They're always that way. I've heard 'em read often. What does it say?"

"Well, you see on the day I had looked out the land—*the day* I hurted my ankle—I had spotted some trees that would do for corners, I thought. I figured the land that they marked would be about one hundred acres. I ain't no surveyor, but I would undertake now that the land that I marked wan't much under a hundred. Someday we will know. And the lines run north and south same as like in a town. This little flat interval with the brook

ing through it, that was fairly inside 'em. There was no tion on that.

o I told the agent the corners and how the lines bore, and e put it down in the paper. He wrote down the size of it to ne hundred acres, more or less,' like they do. But then the t set up a holler for fear it might be a mile square.

Well, I says I done enough plowin' t' know what is an acre, the agent says he didn't doubt that. But he says, 'You take in woods and an acre looks smaller.' Everyone knows it's the r way round, but I didn't say nothin'. I says, 'I went by paces, dn't go by my eye.' And he says, 'Well, you don't look to me fa man who would walk in his sleep.' And I says, 'No, sir, not time.' And he says, 'No, I am sure of it. But still you might e dozed for a spell and not known it, and besides you are kind ong-legged, and we got to put in something or other to limit size, because if I was to give you more'n half of the town, I uld probably get hanged when my people discovered it.' So n Beede spoke up and said he had an idea, and when he'd said at it was, the agent and me agreed to it."

Melissa asked what it was

"Well, when they come to survey the town into ranges and s—and Beede most likely'll be the one who will do it—if it ould turn out that I've got more than a hundred, then I will e up to them from wherever I choose along the sides of my t, enough to bring it down to a hundred. If I'm shy of a hun- ed, they will do the same thing—only they will have the say, en, as to where the addition will be. That seemed to me fair, nd so I agreed to it. I can give 'em a piece off the side of the ill."

Melissa inquired, "Did they put all that in the paper?"

"Sart'n they did. Oh, there's a power of writin'! But 'twan't no rouble to Beede to write it at all. Why, he can make a fair letter —like a 'b' or a 't'—in about the same time that I can make a troke with this paddle"—and after thinking about it for two or hree strokes, he said, "any letter you choose."

"What else does it say, Whit?"

"I said I'd clear seven acres inside of three years. I ... one-handed if Jonas'll help me to burn. It's only ... ing. He said, 'What about stumps?' and I says, 'W... And Beede put in that the stumps could be left."

"What else?"

"I agreed to put up a house, and they agreed to give us a co..."

"A cow!"

"Ayuh. A cow. 'A cow' is what they agreed to. I had sh... forgot it, what with everything else, and then Jonas says, 'H... ain't you goin' t' make 'em throw in no cow?' and the ag... swore some, and Beede laughed at him, and the agent ... 'Where in God's name can I *get* him a cow?' But Beede ... a cow and that was all there was to it. Jonas's rum ... low in the jug, or I doubt that the agent would ... to it so easy Then everyone signed it, and they all ... drink. And then Beede set to it and wrote her all out agai... the agent kep' that one, and they finished the jug. I agreed ... Beede three shillings for doing the writing, and then hi... the agent went home. It was after midnight by that time ... awful nice writing, clear through to the end."

"Who owns the land now, Whit?"

"What?"

"I mean, do you own it now—or not till after you've clear... it?"

"I own it now," he said. "If I shouldn't clear it or ... house, why, then they get it back."

"Oh."

"That ain't no more than fair. It's the same way on ... Governor grants 'em a town, and they say they'll get ... If they don't get the town settled, then he can take the... back."

"Suppose they don't settle Tamworth—'n he takes that ba... from them. What becomes of us then?"

"There don't nothin' become of us. We stay right where ... be. They owned her all right, the Proprietors did, when they g...

us, and so we own it now. All Governor can do is take back art of the town that ain't been settled yet. When I've cleared acres, and built me a house, and lived in it, too, I don't as I would take kindly to bein' asked to get out. That is ouble right now over acrost in the Grants. Old Uncle Ben-granted the land over there to a whole mess of Proprietors, hey got settlers to settle. Then the Yorkers, their Governor, to do the same thing—only he was a little mite late. He red he was late, and he knowed there'd be trouble. But there ney, you see, in this granting of land, and so he went right d, and right away there was trouble. The Yorkers' settlers e in—they was Yorkers themselves—and they tried to put the people that was already there. Well, like I say, a man n't like that. So they shot at the Yorkers, and the Yorkers back, and now there is tarrin' 'n featherin', 'n all that kind hing They say it's awful nice land, though. Still, I'd ruther here I be. Look at that heron, will you? No—along by the te. He must be after shiners, there ain't any frogs there."

"Ayuh. I see him."

"That's the way it is always, you try to put a man off his land."

"Yes, I suppose it must be."

Melissa was watching the hills in the distance She saw the k spire of a pine on the shore—not too far ahead—and how hoved of itself, steadily, smoothly, across the faraway face of hill in the distance. When the pine tree had done, slipped in l vanished against the same-colored background of a great nd of pine, the hill was still there . . and more trees had come l were moving across it. If she thought of the trees, then they od still, and away off in back of them the hill seemed to move rward. But when she thought of it whole, the way it appeared as the trees moving along one after the other . . . and the hill in e distance, quiet, unchanging.

She saw a kingfisher flutter and flash, and two ducks, flying ist, who knew where they were going—and away up in the air, oving ever so slowly, a hawk that belonged there.

Melissa didn't like hawks any better than most people w

had to tend chickens. But here there weren't any ti
watched him so long that she had to admire him.

"Flying," she said when she'd watched him long enough that for a moment it seemed to be true, "looks awful easy"

"'Tis, *I guess, for a bird.*"

She said to him suddenly: "I hear the falls again, Whit"

"That's the ones up ahead."

"Oh."

—and then after a while, "Whit, where d' *you figure* Felipe went to?"

"I d' know where he did"

"*Why d' you s'pose he run off?*"

"I couldn't say."

"Two days 'n two nights, nobody seen him. Lawrence K[illegible] stopped by *there 'n dreened his cow for him.*"

"*Well, I ain't goin' t' go look for him. I seen Joe plain* [illegible] there when I had my back to him—so's I don't want t' [illegible] gain, even where I c'n see him"

"*I was sorry for Joe—in a way, I was—kind of.*"

"You picked the wrong time for it I was, once, *too*— there in th' summer when you warned me against [illegible] wan't no harm in him then. But this time he was different"

"That was Pa, I think, maybe."

"Maybe 'twas. I d' know as I care much. I ain't *goin' t'* [illegible] away any if I never see neither one of 'em."

"*I don't hate Pa—not this mornin'*, I don't. Well, no, I [illegible] say that. But with some more mornin's like *this one there* [illegible] come a time when maybe I wouldn't."

"I don't hate him either. If he was t' fall down a well, I'd pull him out. But *I wouldn't pull awful hearty.*"

"Who d' you think he c'n get t' do th' work *at th' tavern*"

"Prob'ly marry. He ain't goin' t' pay wages."

She didn't answer.

"Y' know, it'd be a terrible thing," Whit *proposed dryly*, he was t' hook on t' somebody, 'n then *have it turn out she* [illegible] able t' handle him. Wouldn't it, now?"

guess so." She didn't want to talk of it. "When do we come m falls up ahead?"

he ones you c'n hear? 'Twon't be a great while. After that, 'll be others. There's falls all the way till we come int' th' l. You know what we're doin'? Same thing as a salmon—in y, you might say."

They have a hard time when they come t' the falls."

o 'll we, I guess maybe, but a lot of 'em get there."

elissa'd talked all she wanted to. But by not talking, she dn't bring back the silence. The sound of the falls came er and louder.

BY LATE midafternoon, the river had narrowed. When y were close in to one bank or the other, Melissa had to lean head back to see up to the top where the sunlight still showed the upper part of the trees But down in between the walls of banks it was cold and seemed gloomy. The water was clear, a dark brown in color, and there were no little waves on it of kind the wind makes. Instead, it was slick and big bubbles e by on it. The current was strong. Out in the middle, each k had a collar round the upstream side of it, and on the down-am side there'd be a kind of hollow and the water trying to ble back into it. Sometimes, close beside the canoe, she could down a ways—parts of great boulders and queer, blackened tree parts. She sat very still, but she didn't sit easy. She ldn't lean back and half close her eyes and just ride along up e river. She wasn't frightened at all, but she had to admit to self that when they were close in by the bank she liked it tter.

Whit was up on his knees and not saying a word. He was orking his way up the river, picking and choosing, planning nd figuring, taking no chances. He was mainly concerned with etting the most distance upstream that he could in return for is strength. There was almost no danger, because he vell enough where the current was heavy, and those w

places that he wanted anyway. He used the slack water he could get it. Now and again, he'd have to cross over a that wasn't too good, but he hadn't struck anything yet that have called in any way ticklish even after he'd passed it.

On the whole, he liked the canoe. It handled all right in kind of water, and so far it was dry. It was light on the care birch canoes go, but it was a delicate thing. It was a better canoe than it would be on the pond where the wind could get it, and if he'd been alone he'd have wanted it narrower. But were doing all right.

As near as he could remember, they had about three of a mile from here to the falls—the last part of it, maybe, so good as this was. What he'd like to do would be to get up in under the falls—there was a big eddy there that wing him in easy—and get his carrying over with before rk. There was a good place to land there, and a path up k that the men used for fishing. He'd lug up a load and issa'd go with him, and then she could fix supper while he back for the rest of it. That way, they'd be ready to make a start in the morning.

They had come round the inside of a bend on the west and now he'd got to cross over. For some distance ahead it too fast on this side and there were too many boulders. But the bank on the far side, it looked pretty good. The river'd built up a beach there, and it would be nice easy going. But he didn't see any place for getting across . . .

There would have been a good place except for an elm that had got hung up on a rock out there—sometime this spring, probably. Well, he'd have to go round it. The down stream side was the only side he could get to, and there was much room between the tree and a place in the water that showed where some rocks were just under the surface. But he guessed he could make it. He didn't see any other way.

When he got out there between the tree and the rocks, he found he didn't have as much room as he'd thought he was going to. He'd figured an elm ought not to have branches sticking out

t angles. But this one had two at least down in under the —his paddle touched them. They made him feel as though tepped on a snake. But he had to drive forward, branches branches: the rocks were too handy for him to ease her gh slantwise; there was no room to turn round, and if he'd ned to stop and try to back out, he'd have been down on cks before he could whistle.

drove her—he had to!

lissa's small toes curled up in her shoes. She sat leaning rd and her hands gripping the gun'l. She could see the tree the rocks, and she could feel Whit fighting the current. g with each stroke, he'd make a sound "uh!" the way a man when he's chopping.

e paddled wider to swing his bow upstream round the end e tree . . .

ey were through the worst of it . . .

he branches were twigs here, and he could come in close to . He got the bow up, and dug in with his paddle. He was ling now almost straight into the current, but because of "almost" he was easing across it. That was just what he ted. Half a foot at a time, they were getting on nicely. When got past the tree, they'd be well clear of the rocks, and he d swing to his right again—and in a couple of rods they'd be of the current.

Melissa misread the state of the struggle. They weren't going ward as fast as they had been . . . they weren't going forward lly at all. By the twigs of the tree, she measured their gress. A little bit forward—stop—and slip back—then a le more forward . . . oh, they were gaining all right, but so ribly slowly! Whit, by his strength, was lifting them forward. t he was having all he could do with it.

She just had to sit there, part of the weight Whit was trying lift.

Whit said to himself, "Well, I guess I'm 'bout fat enough w . . ."

Melissa saw close at hand a twig that looked stout

her to lay hold on and help pull them along. She reached hand for it—

"*Stop that!*" *Whit yelled at her—and he had a time* steady the canoe because it had startled her. He could that, though If she'd ever got hold of it, there was no where they *would* have been next.

He made up what he'd lost in this little excitement, his crossing, and came into a place where the water was Here it was shallow, and he poled with his paddle; they along famously.

"That danged old elm tree," he said to Melissa, " picked a worse place. 'Twas narrow in there—seemed so, *minute. You feel me touch them two branches* down in the water?" He was feeling easy and pleasant, and a little of himself.

She shook her head.

Whit was arrested. "What's the matter?" he asked.

She was sitting up straight. "Nothin'."

Whit thought back till he came to it. Then he said " 'F you'd a got holt o' that thing 'n been pullin' against it, had come off in your hand, 'n you'd fell over backward, where'd we a been?"

"I'm sorry."

"I *had* to yell at you."

"Well, you don't have to now."

Whit took his time about answering. "No, that's right, I Well, nothin' happened."

She was still hurt. She had wanted to help.

Whit said, "From here to the falls, we ain't got t' cross over *near as I c'n remember. It's only a little small piece* from *till we get to 'em. You can hear 'em good, can't you?"*

She certainly could. There was no need to listen She'd been *trying not to.*

It wasn't as heavy a sound as the falls at the *fishing place* had been with them all *night. But it came from above her.* The high banks shut them in. Whit, all the time, was going right

s; he wouldn't know there was anything fearsome about

y came round a wide open bend—the roar opening up—here was a tossing, white wall. It was some ways ahead. a stared at it. It filled all she could see.

hit was picking his way from one rock to another, turning wisting, in and out, thrusting, he was making his way . . .

ow d' you like 'em?" he called to Melissa.

e had shut her eyes for a moment. She nodded her head. n she looked again at the falls she could see what they were. elt a kind of excitement, as well as just awe.

ut in midstream, the river was jumping about, light-colored, hurrying. In here by the bank, it was dark and swung slowly. hey were halfway to them, now, from where she'd first seen a. The fascination took hold of her; she forgot everything

ey came closer and closer. She didnt mind it.

e could feel the spray on her face in the terrible noise. The f the falls was high over her head. Steadily, smoothly, they in to meet them.

hit let the canoe drift round with the eddy, saw the place he wanted, and gently nudged in to it He took hold of a with his paddle, twisting the blade in a crack in the rock. ere now," he muttered And to Melissa he shouted, "You c'n out on that little ledge there" . . . but the falls made such a ket he had to holler again to her.

He thought that likely even now in November he could maybe something out of this eddy that would taste good to her. hen he came back for his second load, he might have a try at

THIS WAS the second night that Melissa'd lain out, and e found it not nearly so strange as she had the first n Thit's presence was between her and all forest dan lough that didn't mean to her that the dangers weren't

As for discomforts, Whit took considerable pride in co
them for her. Cold was the thing that threatened her m
confessed it.

Whit was astonished. He said he wished he'd k
that she minded the cold, he'd have done somethir
He'd fix it tonight, all right.

—and after they'd eaten the trout he'd caught in
he set to work and spread out the fire over the place
to sleep on. He let it burn there awhile, while he
around. He picked up everything. When he
hang up his paddle, Melissa—who felt that this
neatness must in some way reflect on her—had
"What you want t'do that for?"

"So there won't no hedgehogs get at it."

"Hedgehogs? What would a hedgehog do wi

"Chew it all up—if he couldn't get nothin' better.

"Oh. Well—wouldn't you hear him?"

"Sooner or later, I prob'ly would."

"Why would a hedgehog chaw on a paddle?"

"Didn't you never get hedgehogs t'your place?"

"I don't remember. Not that et paddles."

"They'll go after anythin's got any salt on it."

"Merrimack River's fresh water, ain't it?"

"Said t'be, yes. But I sweat enough salt water
that old elm tree t'make th' river taste brackish from
t' Hooksett. This handle's as salty as a piece of bee
father's—and a little more tender. I don't want t'set
all day t'morrow tryin' t'carve out a new one. Right her
they chew 'em, at the base of the handle, 'n a paddle
the wood it's got there. That's where they break when
too much on 'em—that is, they do if the grain in 'em's
that they ain't broken a'ready in some other place. This
paddle."

"You got 'nother."

"That's only a spare one. Matthew Patten made this o
makes a good paddle."

-ished hanging things up. "There, now," he said, coming
the fire, "I guess that there pan has got your bed about
" and he brushed back the fire and ashes from the warmed
derneath. He felt the earth with the back of his hand. "I
at's about right. You won't cook, I don't think, but you'd
pt to be cold."

he wasn't.

Whit, you ain't got nothin' only a blanket!" She had a
and a blanket to boot. "Ain't you goin' t' be cold?"

I don't think it—that is, not t'bother me."

ou sleep when you're cold?"

Why not? I have often enough. I don't mean *real* cold.
t'night is all right. My clothes 's all dry, 'n I'm out th'
I got a blanket. I guess I c'n sleep!"

a while, Melissa did, too—better than last night.

ext day was lowery, but no rain or snow, and they got
etty well. With an early start in the morning and no fire
they made more in distance than they had the first day.
s hurrying now He wanted to get above Garven's Falls,
Pennacook—and maybe Turkey Falls, too, if he could
still enough time left before it got dark so as to pick out
place to lay out if a storm came. He pushed right along
sa never had learned to eat salt pork without cooking it,
idn't get as much dinner that noon as she might have
d that didn't matter because she wasn't working Whit
with her . . . but when she laughed at him, he saw the
nally—near enough, anyhow

as around two o'clock when they passed Soucook River.
mile farther on was the pitch they called Garven's Whit
around it without any trouble, and put in again for
r mile up to Turkey Falls. And when he'd got above there,
still an hour of daylight, even though it was cloudy. He
ht he'd done well.

said, "Now, I tell you what we c'n do. I ain't so
it may rain t'night. What d'you think?"

Melissa knew very well it was going to rain. "Well —looks's though it might, maybe."

"Or it might snow a little. Now if you want to, we ca a piece fu'ther—'bout a mile 'n a half, I should say it was, —'n there Butter's tavern's right close t' th' river. T' *wan't t' lay out in the rain, you might rather lay there*",

"Butter's tavern's t' Pennycook!"

"Yes, we're handy t' Pennycook. Th' road down right up in there." He pointed toward it. "That's th' way have come if I'd had any money."

All her life, she had longed to see Pennacook. That the way that she felt about Portsmouth. She'd made up self a picture of Portsmouth, putting in only the things liked: gentlemen, ladies, Joe Felipe's ships, carriages, *Governor John. She didn't much mind if she never saw* mouth. She knew it wouldn't come up to the picture, she'd seen the real thing she'd have to put it aside whenever wanted to think of the picture. But Pennacook, now, nearer to home. It was bigger than Kettleford, *but still like it so that she'd tried to imagine it as it really would be* good's tavern was better than Butter's And McMillan's well, she'd often thought of herself walking into McMillan's buying some buttons and, say, two yards of fustian, and someone buy silk. They kept silk at *McMillan's.*

If she lay at Butter's, that would be a beginning—that be part of it. And she'd be a guest, too, and be called Livingston—and it might come about, if there weren't guests, that she and Whit would have the same room.

She stood a long time and looked *toward* the place *road was—*

"All right," said Whit, "I guess that's what you'd better then."

"But—but how about you, *Whit?*"

"I'd like to," *he said to her earnestly.* "I'd like to put up good's. I'd like to walk in there and have all of them see you stood by the canoe and leaned on his paddle. "*And I know*

u to know that we can't. Comes down to that, I s'pose we
o it. I got enough money—"
ne on, Whit! Let's do it!"
I want to bad, don't you?"
ll—"
do I." He looked down at the ground, and then he looked
ler. "But here's how it is: this money I got is what Mr.
give to me. Half this stuff I been luggin' is stuff that was
. And the bulk of the rest of it is stuff that I owe for. I
of that part of it whenever I pick it up. I'd know as I'd
go 'n lay out the money—proud as I am of you—to show
in a tavern. That's what it comes down to—my part of it,
w. Your part of it's different. I'll spend it for you."
—but I—but I can't go alone!"
go up there with you—to Butter's or Osgood's—see how
are, 'n then I'll come back here. You'd be all right."
turned away then to hide her face from him.
it felt like a fool.
ally Melissa said, "Can I see Pennycook as we go by on
ver?"
o," he said truthfully. The river swung out around it—like
wo curves of a B. The houses of Pennacook were on the
ht side of the letter.
elissa said suddenly, "All right, then, that's that. We goin' t'
ere? I'll make up a fire."
hit went to work to do the things that were necessary.
rained in the night, but underneath the canoe Melissa kept
She cried a little—not very long—and only when she was
in that Whit was asleep. And she made up her mind that
way or another she was going to see Pennacook. It wouldn't
any money for her to walk through the town, would it?
Whit said after breakfast, "If you want to, M'lissa, why don't
walk from Butter's up through th' town, while I'm goin'
nd it? It's 'bout a mile 'n a half to walk through the town—
s 'n that, it might be—'n it's a good five or six mile t' go by th'
er. You could walk slow as you'd 'mind to. I'd pick you up
r.

the north end th' town—above where there's a brook ... Wattanummun's comes in t' th' river. The rain has le... may be goin' t' clear. You could stretch your legs, anyho...

"Show me how the road runs."

He drew her a map of it. "This here is th' road runs t' ... 'n Haverhill where it crosses th' river, 'n right here is th' ... 'n right there's Butter's tavern—all the same place. He... Derry road here, comes up this way, y'see. They join here ... You c'n go ashore there. Then all you do is walk north. He... Hopkinton road On th' far side o' that is where M... store is. You go right on by there, past the old garrison, ... th' road runs t' Canterbury—goes past a pond there ... pick'rel in it. When you come t' th' river, you bide there ... for me."

"All right. I wish't you'd come with me . . ."

"I think I better keep goin'. Come t' half a day, ... went along with you. You don't mind goin' alone? ... what not?"

"No . . ." It suited her thoroughly.

She stepped ashore at the ferry, waved to her husban... went up the steep, sandy bank of the road from the rive...

Butter's tavern, she thought, examining it critically ... about what she'd expected· twice as big as her father's, but ... how not brave; she didn't propose to admire it. A dog cam... and barked at her, and she turned up her nose.

She kept on up the road and saw—as Whit said—tha... Derry road joined it. There at the junction she stood for a ... ment and looked down the road in the direction of Ken... . . . Then she turned very suddenly, and started up the ... that led into Pennacook.

There weren't many houses. She passed three log houses ... were old and uncared for, half the bark off the logs and the ... curling badly.

But near the top of the hill, there was a fine-looking house ... two stories, an attic, and big, handsome glass windows ...

d whose that was—if it were someone she'd heard

g down the other side of the hill—which wasn't as steep
l been coming up—she came on Osgood's—with a big
t in front of it, and smoke from three chimneys. Now,
s a tavern! She knew Whit had seen it, but she wished
with her. She wanted him with her while she was seeing
she could understand now that maybe Whit had been
his was more of a place than she'd really bargained for.
she put up at Osgood's, she was going to ride up on horse-
till, her curiosity was strong to see what the inside of it
like . . . new sand every morning, she hadn't a doubt,
ing shiny, and probably a crane as big as the tongue of an
She hadn't so much as a sixpence to go in and buy some-
Nor was there a thing she could think of to ask for that
ld be certain that they wouldn't have.
knew now she was going in, some way or other.
nd she mustn't stand here or someone would see her.
started up to the door without any plan—and then the
pened and a tall man, middle-aged, came out and stood
e doorstep. He glanced up at the sky, and then turned up
ollar of his full-skirted green coat. He looked down at Me-
and was not taken aback to see she was a stranger—as he
inly would have been if this had been Kettleford! He
ed the door for her—and she had to go in.
ut then the door closed behind her, and she was alone.
his wasn't a room, it was a kind of hallway; the stairs were in
t of her, and a closed door on each hand. She stood there a
nent, but nobody came . . .
he wished she hadn't come in, but she couldn't go out, be-
se someone might catch her just as she was leaving.
She heard footsteps upstairs, and this helped her somehow to
p up and knock at the door on her right.
A man said, "Somebody knockin'"—and another
ered, "I heard 'em, I heard 'em. Come in, sir! Cc

Melissa squeezed on the latch, and went in unhappily

This wasn't the kitchen—she didn't know what it was. I a small fire, there was a man at a table, and behind a high another man in an apron.

The man in the apron spread his hands on the counter as a matter of duty wished her good morning.

The man at the table sat there and stared at her, his hat back of his head and a quart measure before him. He was his breakfast. He looked to Melissa as though he might horse jockey.

"I came in to ask," Melissa explained to the man at the c —while the man at the table continued to stare at her, "I have a letter."

At a sound from the corner away from the fire, she saw gloom there a man asleep at a table; his face was turned her, but his arm lay across it. The talking hadn't disturbed nor was it likely to.

The man in the apron took no notice whatever of her seen this. "A letter. Well, now, it might be, ma'am. I wo want t' say, really—less'n you'd want t' tell me for who it be?" He spoke not unpleasantly.

"Mistress Livingston."

"No, ma'am." That was all there was to it; she had asked he'd answered.

Melissa said, "Thank you," and turned to go out.

He relented. "From where would it be, ma'am?"—amend his voice.

"From Kettleford, likely."

"No, there's now't here from Kettleford."

"There's that in the corner," said the man at the table.

If she'd been more at ease, she'd have paid no attention she turned and looked first at the man who had spoken— then from him quickly to the man at the counter, who shook head kindly:

"There's no letter from Kettleford. What he means is,

-indicating the customer asleep in the corner—"is a
ford man."

urally, Melissa looked to see who it was . . .

saw who it was . . . as the head was turned heavily and the
lr ribbon showed.

had her back to the horse jockey then, but the man at the
r could see her face plainly. He said nothing at all. It
d to him better not to.

ally the girl simply turned and went out—left the door
—and the man at the counter saw through the window that
nt toward the town. After a bit, he said to the horse
"I know who that was—"

is's fine time to say so."

s, sir. I'm sure of it. Her old man's name is Butler—keeps
t' Kettleford. That's who she is. Yes, sir, that's her, all

ivingston,' she said."

aybe it is."

'ell, I ain't goin' t' go after her She's got a man somewhere
l in the bushes. She ain't alone."

Twouldn't do you no good not if she was alone."

No?"

No. She ain't th' kind that you want."

I d'want any kind. Not this morning, I don't." He drank at
e length. "How'd you know she was from Kettleford?"

She know'd this over here, all right, soon as she looked at
."

Oh. You know, Charlie, you know what I think? You'd ought
et rid o' him. Havin' him here puts me off'n my breakfast."

He's payin'."

"He ain't payin' me nothin'."

"Whyn't you eat in th' kitchen?"

"Stinks o' food too much there. Rum is f' breakfast—for an
onest man, anyhow. Food is for dinner—or better yet supper."

le broke out again: "Three days he's been there—rig!

that corner! He don't never say nothin,' not even tell you, Charlie, you want t' get rid of him on you. That ain't good for a man—settin' there starin', brandy the whole time. All of a sudden, he's goin' t' blow you. He's a big man. You'll have trouble t' hold him."

"Don't be afeard. I won't ask you t' help me."

"Well, I hope he don't do it while I'm havin' breakfast."

Joe stirred in his sleep.

The horse jockey rose. "I'm goin' out t' the stable nags."

The man at the counter turned his back on him. get too close to 'em; they might one of 'em bite you."

Melissa walked toward the town. That was the way Wh told her to go—and he'd said that he'd meet her when to the river.

She had no interest in seeing the town.

Off to her right, a lane seemed to lead toward the river came to her vaguely that she might go that way and per meet Whit sooner—but it seemed too much trouble to figure out whether that was really the case or not.

She passed a fine house and, a hundred yards farther, an fine house. She saw what they were—but there was no respo in her.

She found she was looking in the door of a smithy as walked slowly past it. It was a proper big smithy, too, well and handsome. It was much more of a smithy than Joe's place.

Why had Joe come here?

That was a tanyard there in the hollow—and this was a little hill she was climbing. And that one-story house that on the top of it looked like a good house. All this was Pennacook She always had wanted to see what Pennacook looked like. these things she was looking at—these things were P...

But what she was seeing was Joe, drunk and asleep, his down on the table.

Hopkinton road came in from the westward. That was she remembered, Whit had said it would be, and that on ner was McMillan's store. Some time ago she had thought o in there—she had wanted to, anyhow—to see some of ngs that they had out for sale.

kept on walking. It seemed a long way. This was a wide iat ran through the middle of Pennacook town. Men had was wide. Well, it was.

n there came a long break with no houses at all. She d she'd seen all of Pennacook, maybe.

y was Joe here?

must be the garrison around Mr. Walker's. Twice as high head, the top of it was. . . . No, maybe not quite that, but etty high. Here and there on the top they'd pulled off some logs—squared logs, they were—big ones; squared almost ms. They'd probably used them for building somewhere. e watchtower, now—it looked like a well house on top of e—that was still there. All this had been built at the time Indians. That was before she was born. Nobody, now, saw eed for protection. Nobody knew there was aught left to from. Pretty soon, now, they'd be pulling this down—using ogs for one thing and another Then there'd not be a place here—anywhere!—built strong and a-purpose for a body n to and have safety inside it.

e couldn't break through a wall built like that one. ut Joe could get over it . . . and find where she was hiding. e was back there in the tavern—drunk and asleep. Or by it might be that Joe had waked up

he began hurrying—

Whit heard her call to him a half mile down the river from ere he'd told her to wait for him. She was all wet and muddy r up to her knees. As he swung in to the bank, he called out her cheerfully, "What in tarnation you been doin', anyhow?" Melissa was laughing as she climbed into the canoe—but th t changed to crying.

Whit rested right there. "What happened, M'lissa?"

"Nothin'. I waited so long—'n you didn't come—'n I downstream t' see if I'd meet you. I got kind o' upset, scramblin' along, 'n fallin' down, 'n like that— What you for now?"

"I come just as soon as I told you I would."

"I know it! I know it! Go on. Don't wait here!"

"Tell me what happened."

After a moment, Melissa said, "Joe's there."

Whit waited still longer before he spoke than she had. ...did he say to you?"

"He didn't say nothin'. He was drunk and asleep."

"Where was this?"

She told him.

Whit took his time and thought it all over. Finally he ... up his paddle.

"Where you goin'?" she asked.

"I'm goin' t' Sandwich."

"Oh."

"You better take off your stockin's, 'n let 'em dry out."

"They ain't very wet."

"You do as I tell you."

That made her feel better. After a while, she took ... stockings.

4 DURING THAT day, they got past Sewall's Falls, ... ner there, and pushed on upstream past Contoocook River, ... lay that night at the mouth of Mill Brook.

It turned cold in the night, and Whit went down to look at ... river. In the cold and the darkness, he knelt on a rock where ... current was dead and swished his hand gently around in ... water—feeling the tiny, loose ice bits not yet caught ... This was the very beginning of freezing. Standing water in ... would be frozen by morning thick enough, likely, to ... small pebble. Well, it had come.

He went back up the bank, and put some

was sleeping. He picked up his blanket, and wrapped it him; then he squatted down by the fire, with a little stick ands, to think what to do.

'd be all right today. It couldn't freeze fast enough in this the river to cause any trouble until maybe tomorrow. All By tonight, if everything went well, they'd be to the Forks. new when he said this it would take quite a day to get to rks, but he'd say they would, anyway.) When he got to rks, he'd have to make up his mind. There'd be three things ld do then—three ways he could go—and he liked only them: he wanted to stick to the way that he'd planned. It rely the best way, except for the ice . . . Well, it turned weather—like everything else. First thing to do was to he Forks.

uessed he'd better sleep.

he lay down and slept.

re was just a skimming of ice by the bank in the morning then only in places—and it had stopped freezing. Whit good breakfast of corn meal and pork—he was going to it; and they were out on the river before daylight was full. hen the sun did come up, the sky in the east was heavy gh so that it made the sun appear small, and a man could at it long enough to count five and not have it bother him. e was no wind at all It was a poor sort of day that might almost anything.

Whit set his mind on the Forks, folded his hat and put it un- his knees, and got down to business.

He pushed it all day without any letup, eating some corn and allow of water when opportunity offered.

The day didn't change much, although it began to seem likely the wind would go into the north and from there to north- sterly. That was the last place he wanted it from.

Eight hours of trying to go a little bit faster put a pain i oulders that bit into him badly, he grinned to himself, ought that he couldn't tell whether the sweat on his me from the pain or from the way he was wor

They made the Forks, though, with a half hour of
Whit was asleep before it was dark.

Five times in the night, Melissa got up and put woo
fire Whit never stirred She told herself she was glad
didn't. But he was so deeply asleep that he seemed fa
from her Still, she was more used to the night noises
was not tempted to waken him even by accident. A wol
painter might have tested her some, or a scream from a
but little cracklings and rustlings and the stirring of b
a splash in the river, or the loud squeak of a dry limb as it
on another, she didn t find troublesome

It was getting cold, though, all the night through she c
feel the cold coming, silent and sharp with the winter be
She wanted to put her blanket on Whit, but she didn't da
he'd only wake up and make her take it back

She lay there awake and wished for the morning, and th
some of Joe, and looked forward to Sandwich, and thoug
her baby and how it would smile at her, lying there in
in the sun of the summer

She was asleep when Whit, wakened by hunger, stiffened
cold and by sleeping so long, threw off his blanket and be
the fire, holding his hands to it He could tell from the fire
Melissa d put wood on it several times in the night. He ha
heard her—he hadn't heard anything He still had some of
feeling that he hadn t been asleep long But he knew well en
it was close on to morning And he strode out from the f
look up at the sky ..

Every star out—as clear as could be! And the wind ea
confident out of the north

It was an hour to morning, he went back to the fire
Melissa looked comfortable, he guessed she was warm e
Chewing some corn, he laid out before him the three
he could do. he could take the east branch and try W
gee, because the pond wouldn't freeze; or he cou

ch—where he'd surely get ice—clear up to Casumpy
l that to Sandwich. Or they could try it on foot.
st was the safest, and five times the work. Because he'd
nake two or three trips of it, anyway.
piseogee, he didn't like. This canoe wasn't built for one
andle out on a lake half the size of the ocean, with a
avy wind and snow into the bargain. Overset on the
l a man stood a chance; out there on the lake—well, he
like it. No, that wasn't the best way.
the west branch, from the look of the weather, the slack
be frozen. It would be awful mean work. And if he had
wo or three times to patch the canoe, there was no telling
g it might take.
oot, from here, it must be thirty mile—between thirty
ty. He could do that in a day; that wasn't anything. The
as, Melissa—not in a day, but in two or three days? Yes,
ight she could do it. Snow would be hard for her, but
take it easy. And when he'd got her to Sandwich, he'd
ack here for his things. Yes, he guessed that was the best
hough it hurt him a little to give up the river, he'd fought
ng, he'd like to have beaten it . . .
made up some breakfast, and got everything ready, and
akened Melissa
er she'd eaten, he said to her soberly, "I want to look at
feet."
lissa said, "What?"
want to look at your feet."
ou ain't touched, are you?" She thrust out her feet in
ings and moccasins. "Didn't seem to me yesterday we had
sun—although you did go bareheaded. All right: look a

want t' see what the soles of 'em look like."
There they are, look at 'em."
mean of your feet."
Whit, what's the matter? Are you—"

n I'll haul you out on the bank. 'Twon't be near such a 'twould be t' lug you th' last half th' way from here into ch." He put his hand on her shoulder. "We'll be all right."

i't helpin' you much."

i're helpin' me this much: that if you hadn't come, I i't a started—'n I don't mean only this trip: I wouldn't got nowheres."

u'd a got somewheres. All right, then: the river."

SHE FOUND the river much smaller, and no longer so ening. She could, when she tried, begin to see the water as saw it—at any rate, as Whit saw it when he was making ins. Whit thought of the water as something to use: it took his back the weight of the load. A man can drag on a sled h bigger load than he ever could carry; the same way with a and still more so an ox. With the water to rest it on, Whit move his whole load. But when they came to a carry, he only take up a third of it—less than a third, if you counted sa. When they were afloat, it was the water that carried it; hit did was push it.

here the river'd been bigger, it had been too big to see this. d been so big there that the river itself had filled all of her g: it was a mighty thing, powerful, to be overcome.

ut here it was useful. The water from Contoocook, Bow k, and Suncook, all of the water from Winnipiseogee, Souk, Black Water River, Mill Brook, Turkey River, all that was nd them. What was left was less mighty, less something to ; what was left was some water to float a canoe on.

Melissa enjoyed it that day.

In midafternoon, Whit came in to the bank. There was white ter ahead. On big rocks close at hand—on the shady side of h rock—Melissa could see where splashed water was freezi

"This here's what they call the Five Mile Carry I n't know as it's quite that, but it's pretty close to it."

"Five mile?" said Melissa. "You can't do that before

meant take everything over—three trips going over an' coming back.

"I ain't goin' t' try." And he pointed out to her, "Right a good place—" for her to step out on.

She was pleased; they'd have two or three hours before dark. She could make up a good supper, and they'd fix a fire to sleep. It was a nice place right here . . . a high, level p the top of the bank, with dry wood to 'burn, and fir trees spruces—she could even see beeches. It was a beautiful p

Whit got everything up, and he brought the canoe up.

"What I think that I'll do," he said, thinking about it, take the canoe over, 'n leave th' rest of it here. You c'n stay 'n see t' th' fire 'n so on, 'n make up some supper—'n I'd t' be back before it gets dark."

It was plain to Melissa that it hadn't even occurred to that she wouldn't like being left alone that way.

"All right." Well—it wasn't for long. She knew she was to be frightened, but she couldn't tell how much.

Whit swung the canoe up onto his shoulders and se there. He had to get it just right—he didn't use any yoke. the two paddles "If anything happens that I don't come back, don't you try to come after me, not until morning I expect that anything will, but I s'pose I could turn this or something like that. The road's pretty well spotted the way across, but you'd get mixed up if you was t' try it at would, for that matter. Well—I'll be back pretty soon ain't afeard to stay alone, are you?"

"No."

"There ain't nothin' c'n hurt you." He set off into the slowly and carefully, mindful as always that a birch canoe, ried, is in a good deal more danger of getting a hole in it it is in the water.

Melissa kept busy, but it didn't dispose of her sense of alone, it didn't do anything to lessen the fact that the d between Whit and herself, minute by minute, kept

She got up and went to the edge of the bank and and down the river where it was open and she could see i empty. But she was too soon aware of the woods at her came again to the fire, and tried to warm her cold hand The cakes were past done, but she didn't move them.

This was the Carry Place. Whit knew it well. Anyone who traveled the river, downstream or up—

That brought her to Joe. But she wasn't frightened at ing of Joe. He'd surely be sober if he'd traveled all day She handle Joe, all right. If Whit weren't to come, she'd rather Joe there to keep the night away from her—than to have night close in around her while she was alone. Yes, she'd afraid of Joe yesterday—but now she was afraid of the Maybe it was: that she had all this fear in her, and one would be one thing that she'd pitch it onto—like Joe, yes yesterday—and another time something else. When she ttle, she'd been afraid of her father, other times, of the the tavern. Only a week ago, before Whit had come back, been afraid of the time when her baby would come. Then had gone—in the instant she'd seen Whit coming up the the meadow. This would go, too—this being afraid of the n In the very first instant that she knew Whit was back, it all disappear.

She looked into the woods. Beyond the short reach of the it was black in the woods. She put some more wood on the fir make it reach farther, to make it push back the darkness f away from her. But the new wood didn't catch.

Something had happened to him. . . . He was late; that true now. He was late—it was dark in the woods. Something happened.

She began thinking of what it could be. She thought of the same things that she'd thought of for a month back in Ken ford. She remembered them all, they came to her clearly— the same things.

These were all of them pictures that she'd looked at bef It all seemed so familiar. There was no sharp terror in it. . . .

his," she thought to herself, "is just like it used to be. It
any different. It's just the same thing. I guess I can stand it
tood it before. . . ." She huddled there by the fire.
hit called to her out of the woods.
e was all right by the time she'd stood up.
rought you a present," he said, "reason I'm late." He held
rabbit. "Ain't he a nice one?"
'ou want him tonight?"
don't know—it don't matter. On the way over, I set down
spell, and while I was settin' there, I see what looked to me
it might be a good place—there was a little tree handy, just
it a nice size—'n I says, 'There, now,' I says, 'why don't I do
?' So I rigged me a snare, 'n I thought maybe tomorrow there
ht be somethin' in it. And then as I come along back, there
this feller in it! He's a good fat one, too, ain't he? You been
ight, have you?"
Melissa said yes, that she'd been all right.
Joe didn't come chasin' you?"
No," she said cheerfully.

Most of the morning was spent on the carry. Melissa went
th him the first trip across, and waited there for him while he
de the second trip
His snare was still set the last time he passed it, and he untied
e noose and brought the line along with him. Melissa was
oking the rabbit for dinner
She told him, when he got there, that she'd been asleep for a
hile in a place out of the wind where the sun could get at her.
Whit said that was fine, he noticed the rabbit was done, though.
nd Melissa said yes, she hoped he'd never catch her taking a
ap at the expense of her cooking.
She didn't tell him that her father had—once
After they'd eaten, they tackled the river. There was plenty of
ce in the pools where the water was slow, and Whit, forced
keep clear of it, found it hard going. They kept at it steady
close on to dark.

When Whit stepped ashore—on a beach made of s the mouth of a stream—he stood up and stretched hi

Melissa said nothing; what she wanted to say was looked so tired that when he stretched his arms she him creak, almost.

Then Whit looked down the river—and a good deal of weariness went out of his face. He smiled as though somet pleased him, and nodded his head. Then he turned his bac Melissa. In respect and affection, he called the river a nam was between him and the river.

He said to Melissa, "If you ain't seen enough of Merri River, you better take a look now."

He shared that look with her.

"What we got tomorrow," he explained with some pride only Squam Brook. That's it over there. Then we put it Casumpy and go round the shore of it, and then we'r dwich."

"How many days?"

"Depends on the weather."

She looked again at the river. "You done awful well, W

"We done all right, yes. We had pretty good luck."

"I hope it holds."

"I hope it does, too. I see signs today both ways You ever tell. Well—that part of it's done with." He turned from the river—toward the canoe, to take the things out "There's a place to lay out just up above here 'Tain't an good place. But I ain't goin' no further to look out another

Melissa'd not moved; she still gazed down the river. "No, said finally, "I guess you can't ever tell."

"Give me something to carry," she spoke at Whit's side.

6 SQUAM BROOK was much smaller than even that rowing part of Merrimack River on which they'd been for last day or so. Melissa was freed of any feeling of danger. W

out of the way, all the other conditions lifted her spirits. y seemed to get ahead faster. She said so to Whit.

I know. But we ain't." He pointed out accurately, "Reason it ns so, is you can't see ahead so far."

ven this didn't spoil it.

f everything went well, this was likely their last day of fight- upstream against the tireless current. She'd felt that current nuch as Whit had. But they'd break loose from it tomorrow— y'd be out on the pond then—the current wouldn't be under m, holding them back. That was something to think about!

Moreover, today, she had some variety. Twice in the morning, hit put her ashore and she made her way slowly along by the nk while Whit hauled the canoe upstream with a line. It was ong loop of line, made fast bow and stern, and under certain nditions he could control the canoe pretty well with it. It was d scrambling for him, though, in and out of the water. He und it tired his legs. Still, it was faster than it would have been he'd carried. And one thing it did do, that he was grateful for er: it made him tie all the baggage fast to the canoe and put ease round the plug and the cap of his powder horn.

Late in the morning, and with Melissa in place, he was poling ong and just ahead was an island. He could see the far end of it was about a hundred yards long To the right of the island oked to him the best way; the water was deep there—out to he left, it was all shallow riffles. Whit swung in to the run, and ad to give up his pole; he couldn't touch bottom

It was a narrow, dark place, overgrown on the left bank with lder and maple, while the bank on his right rose as high as two ouses and with an overhang at the top The spruces and hem- ocks close to the edge showed their roots sticking through where the soil had fallen away from under the overhang Two rods was as wide as the stream was in some places. The water was black, and moved swiftly and smoothly But it had no ice i

About halfway through, Whit found his way blocked hemlock had fallen from the top of the high bank, its the roots on had slid down and jammed, and the top

was well over onto the island Upstream of the tree the whole mass of dead stuff that had been piling up there f and a half. There was no use at all trying to cut a way t

"Ain't that a mess," he said to Melissa.

All he could do was turn round and go back—there'd enough water for him to drag the canoe up the other the island.

He let the bow come around . . . and for the first time in week felt what it was to be carried along by the current. He grinned almost sheepishly, knowing this pleasure was a thing he'd have to pay for going up on the other side of the island: *for every foot that he coasted, he'd have to haul* the sled up again. But he didn't care, it was pretty near worth it—just to feel it again, and to have her see, for a moment, what downstream was like.

With a touch of the paddle he sidled over a bit toward the h bank where the water was faster. *They were winging along.*

Then he turned sick as he felt the bow sliding up on a log that was under the water.

He put all he had into a try to back water, his fingers spread on the blade. It didn't do any good. He felt the canoe bottom rise as it caught on a stub The bow was raised up a foot, the stern swung to the right, the canoe heeled to the left, Melissa grabbed for the high side—and over they went.

Whit made a lunge for her—and missed, as he went into the water. He'd seen her let go the canoe. And when he came up, she was nowhere in sight. He figured that maybe she was caught under the log and he tried for her there. But he didn't see her or feel her. The current sucked him right under the log—and he came up on the downstream side of the log—*still holding* onto it but it was a slippery hold. He raised up his head—and twenty feet downstream, he saw Melissa come up. He struck out to reach her. *She looked as though she was struggling,* and he hollered "All right!"

She was swept in to the bank—and safe from drowning, at *least—before he got to her.* He stood up in the water at the

e bank, but Melissa couldn't stand up. She was coughing veak, and there was blood on her face where she'd got a cut er cheek. She didn't appear to know Whit was there.

e looked up the steep bank—and knew he'd got to make it. ook her under his arm and, somehow or other, scrambling slipping, digging in with his fingers, he got her up to the pushed her up over the overhang, and hauled himself up. If been alone, he didn't believe he'd have made it.

le laid her down on her stomach, and let her be sick. She e around. Inside of five minutes, she was able to stand. And to walk around some. She said she was all right. And Whit l her sure she was. The cut on her cheek didn't amount to a ng—she didn't know yet she had it.

What he had to do was to get a fire to going.

He asked Melissa if she could keep moving if he left her alone go try for his gun.

She nodded her head.

"You got to," he said. "Don't you sit down You understand, you?" Even to look at her made him feel sick himself—her ad drooping forward, and her face of no color, and the blood her cheek. Her hair was matted down over her eyes; she put her hand slowly to push it aside, and when her hand came way, she saw the blood on it. She looked at it dumbly—

"That ain't nothin'," said Whit, "that ain't goin' to hurt you. low you keep movin' until I come back I done this to you, and ll get you out of it." He hoped he would, anyhow.

He walked to the edge of the bank and looked for the canoe— s well as he could with Melissa still in front of his eyes First e looked downstream—but he didn't see it, then upstream— here it was: upside down, and stuck under the log, one end of it howing He ran along the edge of the bank until he was right ip above the canoe, and then he stepped off—and slid all the way down on his heels.

His knife had stayed with him. He put that in his mou moved into the water. He felt the cold this time. In he was in up to his hips—and the current pressing

against the slippery log. He hung over the log like a mar yardarm and moved out toward the canoe.

It was the stern that was up out of the water—it air in it that was holding it up.

He wanted the line first. He found that with his feet, into his hands, and took a turn round the log with it and m *it secure. Then with one arm over the line,* he went down unde neath, located his powderhorn, cut it loose, and come up with —his lungs bursting, and dizzy. If it hadn't been for the curre it would have been fairly simple, the cold he could stand for *little while longer. But the current was trying to drag* him loo every instant and take him off downstream.

He tied the horn to his belt, and went down after his rifle couldn't get it the first time, and had to come up again He wasn *so strong now and his fingers were stiffening. He* went down ain—and this time got hold of it He let go of the line and ging on to the rifle, which was still tied to the canoe, he got head above water. After a few gulps of air, he cut loose the e—and with the gun in one hand and the knife *in the* other went sailing downstream

He wallowed ashore about where Melissa had.

For a minute or so, he knelt in the water trying to get his breath back. Then he fumbled his knife back into its place, and slinging his rifle, he tried to crawl up the bank.

But he couldn't make it, his legs wouldn't work.

So he had to go downstream, stumbling along in the water until he came to a down tree to pull himself up by. It wasn't easy. But all the same, when he got to the top, he thought he'd begun to feel better—the blood must have started to move in his legs again. He thought to himself that now, if only his powder was dry, he was making some headway.

But when he got back to where he'd left Melissa, he saw she was down. He was able to rouse her a little, but he couldn't her to stand.

With his hands shaking badly, he went to work f

when he'd got everything ready—wiping out the lock of fle with some dry leaves and so on—he opened the horn. he powder was dry.

e wasn't so quick at it as he might have been, but he brought e. And as soon as he got it to going enough to be safe, he t round like a crazy man, ripping off the dead lower branches hite pines and hemlocks—anything he could find. He'd d up a fire! He'd get it to going!

hen he carried Melissa over beside it.

here was a good heat from the fire, and he figured he still a chance. All the same, he wasn't certain what cold would o a woman—who was in the way that Melissa was.

f she'd been a man or a boy, he'd have taken her clothes off l slapped her all over trying to make her turn red. But she med so kind of frail, he didn't believe she could stand it.

He took off her stockings and moccasins, and he took off her avy, wet cloak and hung that up on some sticks to keep the nd off her. He rubbed her legs and then slapped them, and as e fire got hotter, he opened her clothes so she could get some of e heat on her, and he rubbed her back, too. But he didn't dare b it much, because his hands were so rough he was afraid he'd ke the skin off her.

She seemed to perk up a little. Whit tried to encourage her. 'ou feel any warmer?"

She nodded dimly.

He saw her cheek had stopped bleeding.

"You'll be all right," he said. "You ain't hurt any, are you?"

She shook her head.

"All right, you stay here by the fire. I'll be back in a minute. I ot an errand to do."

He'd got to go into the water again, because without any ax le'd never be able to keep ahead of the fire. He took off eather shirt and the cloth shirt underneath it, wrung cloth shirt and hung that up to dry. He laid the leath flat on the ground. While he was doing this, he tho maybe this time he'd better have a try, anyhow, to

whole dang canoe in at once. He thought maybe

But when he got out on the log, he wasn't so sure of it didn't feel now as though he could handle anythin trying to get the canoe out from under the log His arms pretty weak. He even was doubtful that he could get underneath get the ax, and get back again. Maybe the best thing for him to get back to the bank while he could. He'd go back to M —but what good would that do her?

It was the air inside that canoe was holding it up Ge air out of there, and the stern would sink down, and the thing would slide out from under the log—and fetch up line. Then he'd work it inshore. All right, he'd try it It se simple enough. He guessed he could hold out.

He spraddled the canoe on his belly, and with the point of knife he jabbed a hole in the bottom. The air came rushing and the canoe settled beneath him. He got an arm over the as the canoe slid underneath it.

The line held. The canoe was slantwise a little, and yanked tugged, slow and heavy, mostly under the water. He got hold one end of the line, and was planning to cut that free of the and then to bring it inshore along the log and secure it. Th he'd go back and cut loose the other end, and the canoe wo swing in to shore. He had it all figured out.

He couldn't get any slack in the line he had hold of—b cut it anyway. It pulled right out of his hand. All of the s was put on the remaining line; it stretched—and then p Whit was left on the log. And the canoe was off down river. . . .

He stayed there for a moment, watching it go, feeling a sort of wonder. This wasn't what he had planned. But he co think now just what it was that he had planned. The c seemed to go slowly. Yes—it went very slowly. It was go away from him. . . .

He came to on a sudden—and began to hitch himself al the log toward the bank. He'd get it yet—somehow or othe When he got in to shore, his legs had gone dead. They

way under him. Floundering and flopping, falling down, pering, he splashed along in the water at the foot of the A good many times he went under completely. Whenever od up, he'd look out over the river—hoping to see the He saw it—finally. And it was close in to the shore. But was no telling how long it would stay there—

hen he got there, he found the canoe resting hung up on a in the midst of an eddy. The water was just about up to his Tugging and pulling, he got the canoe in to where the was shallow and the current was easy—and the ice was orming. His hands were like flippers, but he took five or six round a rock with the line, and using his teeth got some of knot.

got his ax, and laid it out on the bank. He got their small pot And he struggled some time with the half a sack they left of Indian meal—wet to the core, and the deadest weight e world. Somehow, he dragged it up out of the water—and he fell on the bank under a sudden downthrust of exhaus- He raised himself on his elbows, and he brought his knees er him, and he waited it out. Pretty soon, he was able to stand. ought to right the canoe now—but it was no use to try it. He w he couldn't do it.

What he must do was get up the bank, take the ax and the pot some meal along with him. And get back to that fire! He'd all right if he could get to the fire—he thought he would, any- . It wasn't the work that he'd done that had taken it out of n, it was only the cold in the water He wanted the fire. But he ldn't carry the ax and the pot—let alone any meal—and get the bank.

Yet one more time, he went into the water . . . and he came t with the line from the other end of the canoe. Kneeling, he d the ax and the pot to it, and the other end of the line he tied his belt. Then he slit open the meal sack, and fumbled into his ckets as much as he could of wet Indian meal. He put s mouth, too.

Then he started to crawl up the bank. . . .

He made it—but he didn't know how. Stupidly, half with exhaustion, and unaware of his triumph in gaining of the bank, he sat on the edge with his legs hanging over, solemnly hauled up the ax and the pot.

The pot was half full of water. Whit thought that was he was going to need water. And with the ax in one hand pot in the other, he went a little unsteadily back to the fire.

Melissa lay there beside it.

His head cleared. The fire, he saw, had burned down a good deal. But she'd put on some of the wood that he had left there for her. That was a good sign. She'd been awake enough to do that.

He spoke to her—and she answered, and then, by an effort she managed to sit up.

It came over Whit that he wasn't near so far gone as she was.

That gave him strength.

"Whit," she said plaintively, "you ain't got any shirt on."

"No It's right here."

"Put it on, Whit. It's awful cold, ain't it?"

"Yes," he said, his head swimming, "it is kind of chilly." Maybe she wasn't quite right in her head; that didn't mean any-thing. She'd come around soon as she got something hot into her.

He put on his shirt—it was warm in the front and dry in some places—and he put on his leather shirt over it. The leather was stiffening now. When it was frozen, it would keep all the wind out.

Now then: the fire. He put on the rest of the wood "You better lay down again," he said to Melissa.

"All right," she said pleasantly. And she lay down again.

He set the pot firmly close in to the fire, picked up the ax, and went after some wood.

He found some good wood, and with an hour of chopping and dragging, he had enough wood up close to the fire to go through the night with. It was long pieces, mostly; he could work it up later. The water was warm in the pot, and he banked red coals around it, and threw in some pine needles to give a

it. They were better than nothing. When the water came got Melissa to swallow some.

ight was failing.

wet meal from his pockets, he put on a stone by the fire. then until dark, he cut a good pile of green stuff for her n. And he piled up more stuff to keep the wind off her, her cloak was now dry enough to wrap it around her.

hey entered the night.

that night long, Whit never lay down. He kept up the d he tended Melissa. He used every trick that he'd ever of to fight the cold from her. In between times he tried to p his gun.

cold that surrounded them was a much harder thing to than the current had been. You were out of the current you came off the river. But the cold lay on all of the ry. They couldn't hide from it; he just had to fight it

hit thought that maybe a hot stone at her feet might do good. So he shifted the meal, and used that one Then he himself why—if one was a good thing—more wouldn't etter. Crawling round in the darkness, he located four more, them out with his fingers, and put them to heat All through night, he kept a row of hot stones along the side of her that away from the fire.

very hour or so, he'd try to get her to drink more and she lly did. Between times, she would sleep.

ate in the evening, her body was warm to his touch, and netime before midnight, a light sweat came on her Whit ught that was all right: so long as she sweated, she didn't e fever.

Nor did she seem to have any pains That eased his mind ghtily. That particular danger, he hoped, had passed over her Two or three times, he tried the meal on her But she couldn't e it.

Thus they went through the night.

In the last hour of darkness, she appeared to

easier. He'd have given most anything to sleep some himself, but he didn't dare try it.

She slept right along until well after sunup, and Whit didn't waken her. The way he felt himself may have persuaded him, but it seemed to him sleep might do her more good than swallowing more of that pine-needle water.

When she wakened, she heard Whit stirring round, and she spoke to him drowsily—like any morning. Then she cried out in

That frightened Whit more than anything else had. He thought that she'd gone—that she'd never be right again. He knelt down beside her

It took only a minute She was all right. She didn't know what had happened That was all was the trouble. It may have been only a minute—but it was the worst minute he'd ever put in . . . When he got to his feet, he was pretty well shaken, but he felt like a new man She was all right. The chances were good that they would get through

They stayed there all day. Whit patched the canoe, dried his gear as well as he could, and ate a prodigious amount of boiled corn meal and pork Melissa lay there and rested He told her she had to, and she didn't argue

He took occasion to go over his gun; he had dried it last night, but it was a long ways from clean. So now he went at it, every little part He enjoyed doing this when he had plenty of time

Melissa said, "That gun is longer than most, ain't it, Whit?"

"This here is a rifle This ain't a smoothbore."

"Oh."

"You know the difference?"

"No, I don't know as I do."

"Some call this a twist-gun. A rifle's correct. Old Captain give me this in his will. He was the best man that I ever knew. You remember him, don't you?"

"Some."

"Back when I was a boy—I was eleven years old—he

rd the winter for I guess maybe a month I felt pretty bad, w, all through that time because I'd used to go round there it got too rough at home. Well, my old man heard before that Karr had come back, and you know what he done? sir, he took a rope and he tied me up for four days. He'd around and he'd stand there and laugh, and he'd say, 'Look m! Eh? By Christ, this is one time when you won't run l to Karr's!' And then he got tired of it because she made do the chores and he let me loose and I beat it to Karr's. Vell, Karr he had some work on the anvil and he couldn't but he hollers, 'Come in, boy!' And I went right in. I never in the house, though. And I stood with my backside lose to the forge; it was an awful cold day out, I remember it It was just comin' on dusk. Well, he went on hammerin'—as drawin' a bar—and I commenced to look round because I glad t' be there. And then I see this rifle high up on the wall and the light from the forge, which is yellow and red, shone on this stock here and give it a kind of a glow, and when he'd the bellows a pull and the fire'd rise up, I'd see this here ber-ookin' slender 'n long show up in the darkness I don't know long I stood there. It made me feel queer

Then Karr he come over 'n he reached her down off the wall out her into my hands. It made my knees shake. It was the eliest thing I'd ever seen in my life—up until then

'That is a rifle,' Karr says to me Oh, I can hear him! 'That's ancaster rifle. Laman made her himself I stood beside him. 'ook him nine day I could learn in a year,' he says. 'He wants t' come back. And I figure to go. I could be happy makin' em things,' he said.

"But he never went back. And do you know why that was? cause nobody cared—not even Ensign. Karr had counted on m. Karr showed him this gun; he showed him what it wou' : half the charge of a smoothbore and about half as much d she'll shoot farther 'n straighter 'n any smoothbore orld She will strike just as hard 'n she's quicker to is rifle here—or any one that's well made—is no

smoothbore than a deer's like a cow. You know what Lord He said he guessed his musket would serve. That's what of them said.

"Down round this Lancaster place they must be h guess.

"Well, Karr went on mendin' plowshares 'n dung forks all things like that. And sometimes he'd make a scythe bla liked to make them. You know mine that he made. And when I would show up and he'd not much ahead, he would this one down off the wall and he'd learn me to shoot. Oh, had some great times of it! . . . Well, I guess that'll do" He finished his work, and he began stowing his tools. "And when he died, there she was in his will" He looked round Melissa. She had fallen asleep . . . He was glad that she had cause she needed to sleep.

The next day, they set out again

Whit shortened the day on Melissa's account—and on own too. It seemed to him now that they'd come a long He'd be as glad to see Jonas Moore when they got to Sandw as he'd ever been to see any man. And how he would sleep Jonas's fire!

Casumpy was easy—with a light wind from the west smooth water to travel.

Toward sundown, to the north, Whit saw the smoke of houses of Sandwich It gave him a catch in his throat. He speak for a moment.

"That smoke—" said Melissa, "is that where we're goin'

"That's it," he answered.

Jonas Moore's house was right down by the pond. Jonas standing on the little beach, waiting. He was a tall man bearded, thin and bent shouldered, but a strong-looking When the canoe was thirty yards out, Jonas called, "H Whit."

"Hello, Jonas," Whit answered.

more was said until Whit rested his paddle. Then Jonas ked, "Well, I see you brung her."

it grinned. "Jonas Moore," he said to Melissa.

'am," Jonas acknowledged this introduction. "You have trip, Whit?"

ell, we got here."

ve any trouble?"

, not to speak of. Overset in Squam Brook, was all."

' Kind o' wet, wan't it?"

o more so than usual."

se anything, did you?"

lt."

h." He steadied the bow, and helped Melissa alight His on her arm felt strong and reliable. She liked Jonas Moore.

Whit, Jonas observed in an unrestrained voice, "She ain't big, is she?"

lo," said Whit, "but she's rugged."

'ou leave all o' that there, Whit—" the stuff in the canoe— fetch it up later."

'hit got out and stood up.

'm glad to see you," Jonas said earnestly.

'm glad to see you."

Come up to the house. My woman, I guess, has got some-g ready."

All right. She been well, has she?"

Pretty good, Whit."

Whit picked up his gun, and Jonas led the way up the path— t Melissa, then Whit.

Melissa went slowly. Then she turned round to Whit—and as kept going.

he put up her arms to him. Whit kissed her—said noth' .

Then they followed Jonas.

7 IF MELISSA had come upon Jonas Moore's ho[use at the] start of her journey, she might not have thought so much [of it.] Now the house appeared to her to be handsome and six. [It] had a chimney with smoke coming out of it; the walls were walls; *the roof was fresh bark. Inside the house,* supper [was] cooking. Inside that house there was a woman.

She felt no disappointment at the size of the house, she [did not] notice that it seemed to lack windows. It didn't matter [to her] that the house hadn't a plank in it, a board, or a nail. She [scarcely] took notice that the door she approached was of skins.

Jonas held the door open—and Melissa went in. But it [was so] dark inside that once over the sill she turned *first of all* [to see if] Whit had come in. He was beside her—and he spoke [to a] *woman who, Melissa saw now, stood by the* fire wiping [her] hands.

Whit said, "Evenin', Mis' Moore."

"Well, Whit, you come back."

Whit stood aside, and to Jonas Moore's wife he said, shy [and] proud, "This here is my woman."

"Yes, I thought it might be. Come here, child, let me look [at] you."

Melissa stood forward into the light of the fire.

Ida Moore took one look at her—and turned upon [them.] "You two men," she said bitterly, "can go outside and stay until I call you to supper. It ain't ready yet."

Whit and Jonas went out.

Jonas said reasonably, "I guess we might go down and [bring] *up that stuff o' yourn.*"

"All right."

They went down the path toward the lake. Jonas obse[rved,] "That supper smelled ready."

"Did to me, too."

After a moment, Jonas inquired, "How much salt you [got,] Whit?"

"Half a hundredweight, maybe."

s said nothing for eight or ten steps. Finally he offered, you got here, 't any rate."

s," Whit agreed, "I guess that's 'bout the size of it."

moved Ida Moore when she looked on Melissa. This -eyed, staring, unsmiling child—who from habit held her up when, from the looks of her, the miracle was that she ble to stand—she was so far beaten down that she didn't know she was dirty.

Mistress Moore drove the men out—Whit himself, for that r, looked as though he'd been dragged through a knothole l went to work on Melissa.

hild," she said to her, "you look to me like you had quite a Now you come here and set down and I'm going to see to Right here on this bench"—a log split in half and the top of oothed. She moved it up to the fire.

'm all right," said Melissa.

Yes, I know: you been sayin' that to him every time that he d you. Now come and set down." She put her arm round the and sat her down on the bench. "I'm twice as old as what you and this here is my house. You just take it easy and do as I I ain't goin' t' ask you no questions But I'll tell you this ch: I'm goin' t' git them clothes off'n you, 'n git you cleaned 'n git some other clothes onto you. When you've some proper d in you, 'n you've had you a sleep, why, then we c'n talk. w was the weddin'? 'Twas satisfactory, wan't it?" While she s talking, she was getting Melissa's clothes off . . .

Melissa said yes, they had had a nice wedding

Mistress Moore brought a blanket and wrapped her up in it. e brought hot water and soap. "How far along are you? Three nths, it looks like."

"About that, it is. Or a little bit longer."

"Well, don't worry about it. If you'd been goin' t' have trouble u'd a had it 'fore now. From the looks o' them clothes, ust a been in the river."

"We overset, 'Twasn't his fault."

"No, I guess that's right. Accidents happen. Jonas'

Whit's an awful good man."

"Oh, yes, he is."

Melissa could remember when her mother had bathed her.

"*Whit speaks awful highly of your husband, too.*"

"Jonas' all right. He does like the woods, though."

"Yes—so does Whit."

"*There, now,*" *Mistress Moore said,* "I guess that'll do y Now then, you keep that there blanket around you, 'n I'll what I got that we can put on you. I guess I ain't only twice as as what you be; I'm twice as big, too. But 'twon't do any h you c'n wrap 'em around you. You ain't goin' t' put nothin' out'n *that* pile again—" the heap on the floor—"not till I get chance to wash 'em, you ain't. Now then—" she was over at other end of the room—"moccasins, stockings, smallclothes, *skirt . . .*" *She came back to Melissa.* "*Here—put on these*."

Melissa pulled on a stocking—the heel up to her ankle folds under her toes. But it felt clean and dry. It felt warm good to her.

Mistress Moore, at the fire, had now swung out the cr taken the lid from the middle-sized pot, and was very caref ladling from the pot into a bowl. . . .

The rest of the clothes, Melissa put on with a good deal haste and not very much care. What she *wanted to* do was to her hands on that bowl.

She did, in due course, and she breathed in its odor, and ca *almost to crying. She made no effort to* think what the b was made out of. But it wasn't pine needles.

"That started with pa'tridge—" she heard *Mistress Moo* voice—"and worked up from there." Mistress Moore wa back of her. "Now if you'll let me, while you're drinkin' th bowlful, I'll give your hair just a *lick 'n a promise.* You d mind if I do?"

Melissa had tasted the broth—and her eyelids had closed couldn't answer. *The taste of the broth* went all through body; she could feel how it loosened the backs of her legs.

feel in it the promise of sleep. In the long warmth of the e sat there and drank it.

tress Moore stood behind her, and fixed up her hair. It eautiful hair; it was soft in her fingers. But it caught in the of them. Years ago—far away—Jonas Moore's woman een a girl in Connecticut—Stratford, Connecticut. She remember!

lissa had finished her supper when Whit and Jonas were honed. She sat on a stool at one end of the hearth, her back e chimney. She smiled up at Whit as he stood looking down t. "You look different," he said. "What you done to your "

Nothin'," she answered, pleased with herself. "Mis' Moore e it for me."

Them are her clothes."

Yes."

Whit didn't like it.

da Moore intervened. "She tried to stop me," she said casu- to Whit, "but I c'n tell you, I'm a hard woman to stop. Ain't onas?"

"Hard'!" Jonas said fervently.

Melissa looked funny—and Whit suddenly saw it—smiled, d then laughed. Melissa laughed, too.

"Well," Jonas said cheerfully, "I guess we c'n eat, Whit."

Mistress Moore waited until Whit had finished his supper, d then she took him outside the house and laid down the law him. She told him flatly that on no account whatsoever was he take that young girl a step farther tomorrow. "I know a k ore what I'm talkin' 'bout than you do," she said "She's all ght now, near as I can make out, 'n I don't see no reason why e'd ought to have trouble But you ain't goin' t' march her venty mile in t' your place, nor have her sleep in a les he gets there. I know you 'n Jonas don't see no harm ither one of you—Jonas or you—just as leave sl 's a bed, I guess. There's times I think maybe th

He's more'n half animil, anyhow, Jonas—'n I d' know you be. You leave her here, d' you understand? You *here till I say she c'n go—'n that won't be tomorrow, nor* be the next day."

"How long d' you figure before she c'n travel?"

"I don't know. *But she ain't goin' t' travel a step* not insi[illegible] a week, anyhow, at the shortest."

"It ain't awful far."

"Maybe it ain't. And I suppose the next thing you'll sa[illegible] she won't have to lug nothin'."

"Well, she wouldn't."

"Are you tryin' t' argue?"

"No, I ain't, Mis' Moore—truly."

"*You* c'n go in there t' your place tomorrow. You go [illegible] But she's stayin' right here. That's settled now, is it?"

"Seems t' be, yes."

"All right, then, it's settled."

"It's awful kind of you, keepin' her."

"*She'll be comp'ny for me You don't know* what that mea[illegible] All right—I've said my say. You c'n go back in the house [illegible] I'll be in in a minute. When you get in there, you'll most lik[illegible] find Jonas tellin' the bride how to set up a bear trap, or how [illegible] take the guts out of a porcupine 'n not get the quills into [illegible] He's an entertainin' man, Jonas, he's gifted that way. [illegible] another thing, now that I think of it, is don't you 'n Jonas [illegible] t' set up all night in front th' fire 'n talk about trappin'. *I wa[illegible]* her to sleep."

"Yes, ma'am," said Whit.

As he went into the house, he thought to *himself*, "*I never* [illegible] Jonas guttin' a porcupine. But there ain't only one way th[illegible] know of t' do it. . . ."

Sometime in the night, as they all lay asleep—Mistress Mo[illegible] and Melissa on a thick pallet of cornhusks, Jonas and Whit on across on the other side—and the fire flickering and falling, [illegible] *everything peaceful* . . . Melissa was wakened. She was too [illegible] in sleep to come up out of it suddenly, but on her face she'd

hing cold and wet and alive. Half asleep and half fright- she put her hand up to it—and screamed and sat up. It was nd alive.

ere was noise and confusion and barking and terror. Then was beside her . . . and she clung to him hard.

seemed a long time before things got straightened out and new what had happened. Slowly the terror let go its hold on But she was still trembling. . . .

had been Jonas's dog. The dog, they explained, had come in somewhere, and finding a stranger, had sniffed at her— rally. The dog knew Whit and liked him—but she was new im.

nd when Melissa had screamed, Whit and Jonas agreed, she frightened the dog and set him to barking.

felissa said yes, she understood now. She was sorry, she said, ave made such a fuss.

onas brought the dog up to her. He was a big fellow, black, part mastiff—the other part hound. They all called him ajor." The dog was uncertain and knew he'd done wrong— he was still a little afraid of her. Both Whit and Jonas med to understand perfectly. "Reach out your hand to him," hit said to her, "slow."

She did it.

Jonas talked to the dog and persuaded him gradually to sniff her hand.

"Now," Jonas instructed her, "slide your hand around easy nd scratch back of his ear. He wouldn't hurt you! God, he ouldn't hurt nothin'!"

Duly, Melissa scratched back of the ear.

The dog liked it. He pressed his head up against the scratch of er fingers, and he half closed his eyes. When she stopped for a oment, he made it plain that he wanted more of it.

"There, now!" Jonas said to him. "Ain't you ashamed, M o been scairt of a woman! And you claim you're a Now you go and lie down—go on, now! Lie dov

went and lay down.

Jonas apologized for Major's behavior, and Whit said lissa, "You're all right now, ain't you?"

She said she was all right—and said again she had made such a fuss.

Jonas assured her that that was all right. But Jonas's wife nothing at all; she was too angry to venture on speech.

They all lay down again, and before very long Melissa tell that the others had gone back to sleep. The dog lay by fire,—busily, noisily licking himself. Then he, too, lapsed sleep, snored for a while, and then he was quiet.

The fire sank farther, and cold came into the house.

Melissa lay wide awake. Tomorrow, she knew, Whit leaving her here.

But sleep came to her, finally—she was too tired to look any more.

8 WHIT GOT away bright and early next morning

Leaving Jonas's place, he had in mind no particular path. didn't need any. He knew where he was, and where he wanted go. The path didn't matter, the lay of the land being clear his mind: how the principal mountains bore from each other the course of the rivers, and where the bigger ponds were. ponds, the low ridges, small brooks, and so on were not things that he traveled by this time of year when the weather was good. The leaves were gone now; a man could tell where he was.

As he stood with his back to Jonas Moore's house, Red Hill on his right hand lay to the south and a little bit east. Israel Mountain, looming up high and easily seen, was almost due north. The line that he wanted was halfway between them. But there was no need to be too nice about it. If he veered to the left, he'd only strike Bearcamp River a little farther up stream than he otherwise would; if he got too far to his right, the steep northwestern slope of the Ossipy Mountains was

him back on his course. These two, the river and the y Mountains, made a kind of angle into which he was ng from the wide-open end. At the point of it, the river mountains came so close together that no man in his could, without knowing it, squeeze through between except at night in a snowstorm—when no man in his would be traveling anyway.

would pass to the north some of Beede's house, this and well to the northward of Poole's. Well, that was all

was traveling fast, his ankle not bothering him. But he carrying a pretty good load all the same. He had his gun his ax, both held in his right hand, and slung from his lders were a half dozen traps—each with a chain—his ket, his powderhorn, the tools for his gun, and a small sack orn, with two pounds of pork in case he should need it. He a spare axhead that weighed close to four pounds, and he his knife and his bullet pouch hitched to his belt. All in what he carried would have weighed forty pounds prob-

et he stood on the farther bank of the Bearcamp, ten s—on a bee line—from Jonas Moore's house, in what ked by the sun to be less than two hours This was the am in which he'd hurt his ankle. Today, the water was her than it had been then. It looked ready for winter . . . it felt like it, too.

Now he turned north, cutting across the flat interval cov- d with pitch pine that lay between Bearcamp and another er that joined it farther downstream. A plain covered with ch pine made the best going there was: it was good under- ot, there was no brush to speak of, and the branches weren't oublesome. If there was enough sun coming through to ep a man straight, he could go just as fast as his legs wou' t him. He had nothing to worry him.

He was going due north, right on a line for lountain—right dead for the peak of it. Now

where there'd be a tree down, he'd catch a glimpse of of the mountain—the dark line of the shoulders, and above, the gray, granite peak. Whenever he saw it, i. to him higher than he'd thought it was going to.

Whit smiled when he saw it. . . .

When he picked up the stream on the far side of the val, he crossed it and followed up the east bank for a mile and a half until he came to a forks, where he took east branch. He stayed with this for about a mile, it might and then worked around the northwesterly shoulder of the hill which he'd stood on the first time he'd been in here

Here, for the most part, it was heavy, old spruce—high dark overhead, and with a scattering of boulders, windf and seedlings down on the ground. Then the beeches began to come in, as he came down off the hillside

His load wasn't heavy. He was pretty near there.

As the land leveled off at the foot of the hill, he over a little so as to pass a big maple. This was a line spotted both sides. He put up his hand to it—and step onto his land.

Coming around to the front of the lean-to, he saw that one had been there. He struck his ax in a corner tree, up his gun carefully, shucked off his load, and stowed away. Then he came out and looked up at the mountain.

It hadn't changed any.

Whit stayed there twelve days. He had rain off and on, nothing out of the way really, for that time of year, and days it was bright. Mornings, of course, it would be pre cold. But at night he had a good fire and he slept under she There was only one day that he had a hard time of it becau of the weather.

That morning, he stood in front of his lean-to and saw ground covered with really good tracking snow. The sky

ouded in and there was a steady wind blowing between and northwest, but there was no feel in the air of any snow coming: from the way the snow lay, the wind that brought it had been from out of the east more, and then worked round. It was a day that was sent by the Lord for n to go get a deer—and Whit reached for his knife and of the edge....

e didn't believe he'd stop to eat breakfast—he'd had a y good supper—he'd just take something with him. It close now to full daylight and he ought to get started.

e turned and bent down to go into the lean-to—to take n his gun and go over all parts of it—and when he put is hand to take hold of the gun, he caught sight of his ax. e wished he hadn't seen that.

s he sat down and began unwrapping his gun, he was dy bringing up reasons why it was all right for him to go ing and leave for a while the work he had come for. He "I've eat nothing but trout the last four or five days and gettin' so now that my stomach don't take to 'em. If I had e deer's liver, now, I could work better"

When he pulled off the wrapping, he could smell the grease the metal.

And the thing of it is," he said aloud now, "a man gets ng faster—in the long run, he does, I think—if he suits at he's doing to what's the best time. Now like this morn-, with this snow to work on, I might get a deer in no time ll; where if I was to leave it, this snow might be gone and ould hunt a couple of days maybe and not come on a thing"

All the time he was busy with one thing and another, getting dy to go, he kept adding more reasons he'd done pretty well th the work that he'd come for, he had forty logs cut for build-g his house, and only twenty to go. He needed a deerskin as ell as the meat—and the skin was a thing that would be elissa. All winter long there might not come a day as erfect as this one. It was bad luck—there was no s

it!—when good luck like this happened not to mak… it. And what he didn't eat of the meat, he could … Jonas's.

When he was all ready, he stood in front of his lean-t… gun in his hand, deciding with care as to just where to go.

The best way would be to go down to a pond, and … round the edge of it. Of the two ponds that were … thought he'd try the larger one—the one that brook on … place went into. He'd have a better chance there, the shore be… longer, than he would on the little pond more to the west; … if more snow should come, he'd have the brook to come back …

The pond lay a little to the right of the mountain, and … looked up to see if the mountain was out.

Solemn and black, with the gray sky behind it, the moun… looked down at him, and slowly there left him—there … from him—all his assurance that he was about to … hunting.

He knew when he was licked. There was no use going … There'd be no pleasure in it.

He turned back into the lean-to, stuck his gun in a corner, … yanked his ax from the cornerpost. He didn't want to eat … thing. He flung down his powderhorn, and went striding off … terly to the place where he'd been working last night at … Here he tackled a spruce tree, not even pausing to blow on his hands, and when he'd lopped off enough limbs to let him get … the trunk, he struck into it viciously.

He was throwing his ax, striking as hard as he could. His … were set in a line, and his eyelids were lowered. With the ax, he bit into the spruce tree as though it was to blame.

He knew what was to blame—or he claimed that he did. … was simple enough. And it had nothing to do with conscience … duty. It was something he'd known for a long time would hap… pen—but he'd forgotten about it, somehow, since last summer. All there was to it was this: now he was married, he couldn't … hunting any time he felt like it. He would never be able to … long as he lived, he would never be able to do as he …

d once thought he would be as soon as he'd left his father. right, what of it? It was nothing to cry about. He'd known ıld happen. And he hadn't been cheated. He had Melissa. s, he had Melissa—but still, all the same, he hadn't expected vhen he couldn't go hunting it would make him feel sick s stomach—the same as it used to when his father'd pre-d him.

e struck harder and harder, with his arms straightened full t the end of each swing, and pulling back with his shoulders. s a fool way to chop—but he'd got to do something!

nen it happened.

le stood there and stared down at it. He saw what had hap-d, and he saw that the happening of it was over with. He n't seen it or felt it. But now that it was done, he was begin-g to feel it: it made the skin crawl on the backs of his legs. he head of the ax was deep in the ground, just under his . As he stared, he said slowly, "No, I ain't cut any." And n he moved his foot, gingerly, away from the ax. The side of foot had been touching the ax. That was as close as a man ld come, really.

He let go of the ax handle, stood up straight, and turned nd. He said "Whew!" with a good deal of feeling, rubbed his e briefly, and then went and sat down.

Pretty soon he felt better. All choppers *get* cut—sooner or later y do. But he'd missed it this time. He turned and looked at e ax, stuck there in the ground. "If it ain't got a gap in it too g to grind out, I guess things are all right" He got up to go e, and found the bit was undamaged. "I guess the ground being oze, that was able to stop her, instead of her keeping on going ntil she come to a rock." He wiped off the bit with the palm of s hand. "Went in far enough, though." It had gone in past e temper.

He set the ax into the tree.

"I guess I'll go up and get somethin' to eat. That ick enough so that I can't complain if I don't eat routs till I get back to Jonas's."

"What the good luck was," he said, when he'd sat "was that I got a warning—instead of a judgment—' I went on, there, about not goin' after a deer."

9 THE HOUSE Whit had in mind would be s his ax handle, measured on the inside, and half that in That is to say, as he stood in the doorway facing into the h *it would be short of eight feet across to the wall,* and the would be twice that distance in length.

He couldn't build it much larger than that, because weren't enough men near by for a raising. Jonas was over to help him—once Whit had the logs ready—but to h *the logs for a house any bigger than the one* he had pl would have called for oxen to haul them, and for more th to raise up the logs and get them in place. *As it* w was going to have to use logs a little slimmer than usual, and to use more of them. It would take longer, but it wouldn't the house any. It was not how thick the walls were, it was tight were the joints.

He hadn't said anything yet to Melissa, but he'd set heart on having a chimney. A chimney would take him to build, probably, as all the rest of the house would. *But* he a feeling that maybe Melissa might be in a way to be cold; she might take some kind of harm from it that he *know about—though he never had heard* anyone say that so. Over and above that, he thought it would please her himself would be proud of it, too It would set them apart most pioneers. When a man builds a chimney, he at least to stay there.

Well, it would not be a house like Beede's to Sandwich would be an awful lot better than some he had seen He'd chimney *if it took him a month.* He'd have a good one. And hoped, when he had it, Mr. Gowan would hear of it.

He was getting ahead of himself. *The first thing* to do finish cutting the logs. . . .

ɦt days from the day on which he had started, he had them t and ready for hauling. Five days, in the first place, was he had figured on. The difference was great, but the reason was natural: trees of the right size and straight had turned b be scarcer than he had suspected. And yet he knew the s. "Still," he said to himself, "you go through the woods on errand or other, and you see a nice little spruce tree—ɦt as a ramrod, and a good size to handle—and you think, l, now, that there is a nice little tree,' but you ain't got no br it right at that minute, and so you go on thinking about ɦing else. Maybe a half hour later this will happen again. e course of a year, it has happened quite often. You add all up—whenever someone says, 'spruces—what I mean to little ones'—but you leave out all them half hours that come tween. You get the answer that if you should need little tes, the woods would be full of them. But when you cut out ok for them, what you come on to is all them half hours."

nother thing was that he stuck right to spruce. He had vari-reasons, perhaps none of them good ones. But one of them he thought the house would look better all of one kind of d.

he only places that spruces grew to the size that he wanted xcept for scattering, single ones, of which there weren't ny—were where an old spruce had fallen around thirty years maybe—thirty or forty. There, he'd get a stand of a dozen or . But of those, three or four would be all he could use. The t would be crooked, or have too much taper, or there'd be nething else wrong with them He covered fifty acres of und in looking out trees, before he could find sixty trees of kind that he wanted.

The cutting and limbing was fairly quick work.

Then he had to haul them. He put in a day, almost, making a d: two small sticks of maple, the butt ends laid forward, and mmed on the bottom, did all right for runners. He notched ese on top to admit two birch crosspieces, and with his ax s knife he got a fairly tight joint. He was tempted, of

to try pegging the joints—heating his ramrod to ... with—but he decided against it: it would take him ... it wouldn't be worth it. He contented himself with ... joints with wet rawhide—slotting the runners ... hide passed under them—and then setting the sled in ... the fire. The rawhide, as it dried, pulled tight enough ... anybody. He fixed a pole out in front, and was ready for ...

Then it came on to rain, and the snow went away.

Whit went down to the pond, and with a piece of pork ... skitter, and a twenty-foot pole, he flung out pickerel— ... into the trees—that came down with a plop and was ... length of his arm. It would make a change from the ... setting a trap by the shore for an otter, he came home ...

And the sled brought him luck. He surprised a young ... pine that was about to go after the rawhide—but that ... time yet to do any damage—and before the porcupine ... what was up, Whit had joyfully knocked him in the ... the ax. It was a young one, all right, but with six pounds ... meat in him, not counting a liver as big as the palm of ... Whit had that liver over the fire before he'd even started ... out the meat. With fresh meat and pickerel ahead of him— —his hand shook with excitement.

He ate all he could hold, and after he'd hung up the ... lay down to sleep before it was dark. With so much meat ... his wet clothes didn't bother him; he slept without waking ... it was light.

There was fresh snow on the ground in the morning— ... not so much of it as he would have liked. Still, it was better ... nothing, and snow was still falling. He ate most of the ... some more of the meat, and felt that things generally ... pretty good shape. Then he went at the hauling.

He started in dragging three logs at a time, but this ... long; he was soon down to two. The sled worked ... until the handle came loose. His feet slipped in the ... fell more or less. The main trick, of course, was to ... moving once he had them started, and he had to ...

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It wasn't too bad, and it wasn't too good. The skin wasn't wo
anything, but he scraped it clean anyway. It might come
handy—you never could tell.

He slept dry that night, and from dark till past daylight,
wakened hungry, and he felt pretty good.

When he set to work, it took him less than ten minutes
prove that a man, to hew properly, needs more than an ax.
needs a good solid rig that will hold the log steady—one of the
three-legged horses with a peg sticking up in it that fits into
hole through the end of the log. They'll hold a log steady. A
he needed a chalk line so as to tell where to hew.

He was more pleased than otherwise that all this was so.

Inside of five minutes he was on his way back to Jonas's—
cause he couldn't go any further without an auger and chalk

Whit hailed the house when he got near enough to it—
there and waited . . . and then hailed it again. . . .

Melissa came out.

She looked to be well, as Whit came walking up to her—
he couldn't say anything to her at all.

Jonas, she told him, was off in the woods somewhere,
Moore'd gone up to Beede's—she'd only left a few minutes
she wouldn't be back for an hour at least.

They went into the house.

10 THAT NIGHT after supper, Jonas having agreed
with Whit on the morrow to help lay up the house, they sat
front of the fire—all four of them—talking things over. J
already had had opportunity to report on his day to Whit,—
had all of two hours, and he'd used all of both of them. So
he'd covered not only today, but also most of those happen
of the past week or so that really required an app
listener—things that a woman could not understand. H
had one left, though. He told Whit of it now.

four days ago Jonas had had a shot at a wolf. His gun had sed fire.

Whit understood. Whit understood perfectly. He shook his d slowly, and spat in the fire.

onas was satisfied.

But Jonas's wife saw fit to inquire why the gun had missed

There were a score of possible causes for a gun's missing fire, half of these were preventable.

onas said curtly, "I d'know what it was."

There was a very uncomfortable silence.

Whit tried to help out. "Might a' been anythin'."

That did help a little, but it didn't cure matters.

Melissa asked Whit to tell her more of the house.

Whit did his best. "Well, I guess I told you about all there is ell. It mightn't seem like much for th' time I been gone be, but all it is so far is—well, is a pile o' logs, you might

was Jonas's turn to help Whit out now. He did this by say- "Whit, you ain't told me if you figure to build in a mbley?"

Well, t' tell you the truth," Whit said, not without pride, "I figured I might."

A stone or a wood one?"

Stone, to begin with, four feet or so, anyhow. I'll see how it before I decide how to finish"

Well, you'd ought to have something," Jonas approved "It'll e all the difference. Yes, sir, a chimbley's a wonderful thing"

da Moore, who was knitting, didn't make any comment Nor Melissa, to whom it hadn't occurred that they might not have imney.

I seen it," said Jonas, "a good many times A man and a man will go through a winter, we'll say in a lean to. The man ites it tight, the same as you or I would, and the roof is d one, and he don't hear any talk about needing a ch. en the next thing he does is to build him a house.

any chimbley, but why should it have? The fire's outside, it, same as t'was with the lean-to. And if the man was alo *he would leave it outside.*

"But if he's got a woman, you can make up your mind to that sooner or later she'll want a fire inside. They always do begins to come on 'em with the first fall of snow. They're alike; you can count it. So what does she do? She takes 'n s a great hole in a watertight roof to let the smoke out!" Jo paused for a moment.

"Well, that'll work pretty good," he almost conceded, "wh there ain't any wind and it's a little small fire—about as m you might say, as I got in my pipe."

Jonas's wife, with chilly serenity, stuck to her knitting; M *lissa was interested but a little uncertain; and Whit,* wholly 'ess, blinked at the fire.

"A man," Jonas continued, "can cook on a small fire, and the 't any man thinks he's got to cook *every* day." He was s talking to Whit. "But you take in the wintertime, *she'll want* fire inside the house *all* the time—wind or no wind. You see, don't want it only to cook over. No, sir. She's got a notion th with walls all around her, and a fire to boot, she'd ought to warm. She wants to be warm, you see, even in wintertime know that ain't natural, but that's how it is with 'em, and the ain't now't you can say to 'em. They want a big fire.

"*So she puts the wood to it,*" *Jonas continued,* "and may she gets warm. I hope she does, anyhow—she sets enough s by it. But she can't take any comfort in just bein' warm unl she can breathe. A woman has got to have everything perfe And the way it is now, she's got such a big fire that, *in spite* the hole in the roof, the smoke in that house's *begun t' thick* up some. It is so thick that the only way she can breathe—*or his* for that matter—is to crawl round on their belly. So what do she do? You don't know, and I'll tell you: she goes *all round* th walls and she knocks out the moss—or the mud, or whatever— that he has put in there to make the place tight.

"*She gets rid o' the smoke.*

But the wind that blows out the smoke, will blow the cold in, 't it?—and the snow and the rain. Pretty soon she finds that and she mosses it up again—until the smoke gets too much her. Then she starts in on it over again. She gets tired of that. y, I knowed of a man once who was given his choice: get a woman or build in a chimbley." Jonas reached out and ed at the fire. "I would advise you to build in a chimbley," he

"I'm glad," said his wife, "that you think it was worth it."

"I think it would be for Whit," Jonas said quickly. He tried rawl back. "She mightn't give him his choice"

"Oh, yes, she would." His wife held up her knitting to see how was coming. "Women," she said, "ain't so clever as wolves." e turned round to Whit. "When're you goin' to go after your w?"

"Not till spring, I guess, now. I ain't got nothin' to feed her."

"What you'd ought to do is get hold of one now, 'n then Jonas uld winter her for the milk or the calf, 'n then in the spring u could drive her to your place."

"She wouldn't pay you for her keep in the winter"

"She'd come near enough to it, when you figure the dressin'. never yet see a garden wan't plowed from a cowyard was fit to ow stuff."

"Well—"

"What you'd ought to think of," put in Jonas, recovered, "is ettin' a dog A dog's what you'd ought to have."

"A dog would be handy."

"A dog is more handy, I claim, than a cow Way it is with a ow, she won't begin to take hold unless you feed her first Don't nake any difference which it is that you're after, whether it's dressin' or milk, you got to put the feed in the front end t' get the back end to work. But you take a dog, now, that's a little mite hungry, and he'll hunt all the better. A dog, he ain't got t' be p n advance. He'll do his work first, and then he'll eat his d

"Still, you can't eat a dog."

"That's only your own dog—and it's more you

Hell, any Indian—or a Frenchman, for that matter— rather eat dog meat than cornbread or greens."

"You can't argue from Indians. Their stomachs're d You ever eat any?"

"Dog meat? I don't know. Sometimes I've et meat dian give me, that I thought would set better if I didn't ask." H got up from his place, explained, "I'm awful dry," and came ba with two jugs: rum for himself; the other was cider.

Whit asked him to sing, and Jonas sang them "The Robbe Melissa said he'd done well with it, and asked for anoth song.

Jonas had a swallow of rum, thought for a minute—while of them waited—and then announced quietly, "The Death o Fair Martin."

Whit said he'd never heard it.

"It's a good song," said Melissa.

"Yes," agreed Jonas, "she's a good one, all right. Twenty verses that song has got in it. If I go to leave out any," he invited Melissa, "you set me right"

"All right."

Jonas said, "I can tell you the story, if you want me to, fir Whit, and then you'll know better about what's goin' on."

"I guess I c'n follow it."

"Sart'n you can It ain't any different from most of 'em, reall All it is, is this Martin—the one in the name of it—he's a young fellow that they go and hang for something they think he done although he didn't do it. There's a time along in there you think maybe they won't, but they hang him all right. Well, he's danglin down on the end of the rope and about finished kickin', when this woman shows up that claims he didn't do it and she's got the proof of it. She cuts him down, but he don't last long—not more'n a couple of verses—no, wait now—three, ain't it?" he appealed to Melissa.

"Three," she agreed

"Yes, that's right: three verses. His neck's all stove-up; I've seen 'em myself. Three verses is right I recollect now; I'd for

ken the middle one. Well, then she laments for quite a long ill with his head in her lap, and then she goes and gets nded. She does it on purpose. The tune's awful pretty." He ved his head thoughtfully, collecting himself. Then he said estly, "I don't claim t' sing it so good as I used to when I had re of my teeth." He looked up at Melissa. "Maybe you'd better g it?"

Melissa declined.

Jonas put his head down again, and they all gave him silence. en raising his head, but with unseeing eyes, he announced ce again, "The Death of Fair Martin." He put his head back d sang it.

It was a good song; there was no question about it.

They all enjoyed it, and Jonas did, too He left out a verse but elissa said nothing, and his voice only failed him two or three mes, and then it got better as soon as he'd wetted it.

When he came to the end, he spoke the last half dozen words a sign that he'd finished—and reached for the jug.

They all of them told him that he had done well.

It was Melissa's turn next She sang "Billy Boy," and she sang beautifully. She had a nice voice to sing with it was gentle nd cool, and at the same time it was clever. When she went ter a note, she didn't slide her voice up or down—the way onas did—until she came to it, she could leave off with one ote and light on another no matter how far it was in between. Whit was proud of her He always was anyway, but he was haken with pride when he heard her sing.

Jonas said when she finished, "You're a good singer."

Ida Moore sang—not as well as Melissa, but the best that she ould, and they were all glad that she did sing She chose an old-fashioned song, which—as she said right afterwards—"wan't no more old-fashioned than what 'The Robber' was, anyhow."

No one asked Whit to sing. Jonas sang two more short ones, and then Mrs. Moore said it was time they all went to bed.

"I seen a woman once," Jonas informed them, "close t- years old. Ellen Stone, her name was. She might a been

that—later on she got older—but at the time when I
she wan't far short of that. Well, sir, I seen Ellen Stone—
Ellie, they called her—sing a hundred and fifty-two songs
tween night and morning, and drink three gallon of cider. He
Benham was there; he sung eighty-five and got trimmed."

Whit wasn't certain after he got to bed whether he wis
they'd asked him to sing, or whether he was glad that they had
He'd feel one way, one minute, and the next minute, the oth
Nobody ever *had* asked him to sing....

11 NEXT MORNING Jonas wasn't ready to go. Whit ha
fully expected that this might be so, but he had hoped someho
get Jonas ready so that they could leave before noon. He
it hadn't figured on Ida Moore, though. She knew exactly th
gs Jonas must do for her before she was willing to let him
set out.

So the morning wore on with one thing and another—Jonas
attending to this, and fixing up that, grumbling and touchy be
cause Whit could see him being bossed by a woman, and als
because every one of these things that Jonas had to do now we
things that he should have done some time ago. Finally, towar
eleven o'clock, he went off to borrow the auger for Whit and
himself to take with them. He said he'd be back before noon

But he didn't come back....

Whit, by this time, was more put out than Jonas. He had bee
feeling the pull of his house; he had to get back there and work
on it. He could see the walls rising, and the thought of the roof
kept coming before him.

Melissa, mistakenly, said she didn't mind. She was only too
glad to have Whit stay till tomorrow.

Whit said, well, *he* minded!

Jonas showed up at sundown. They heard him singing a half a
mile off ... and to make everything perfect, he'd forg
auger.

Ida Moore wasn't angry—and no more was Melissa. They felt the same as they would have about a change in the weather. If it rained, why—it rained; that was all there was to it. It wasn't anyone's *fault*.

But Whit was so angry that, without saying a word, he set off on the path Jonas had come on.

He was back before dark. He wasn't singing and he had the auger.

Jonas went to bed early, and Mrs. Moore, too.

Whit and Melissa sat up by the fire—in silence, of course, so as to let Mrs Moore go to sleep. Once that purpose was served, they could talk all they wanted.

Melissa was drowsy—with her head on his bosom. . . .

When Whit chuckled, it wakened her.

She asked what was the matter.

"That was funny, now, wan't it?—him forgetting the auger."

She said yes, she supposed that it was.

Neither contrition nor headache assailed Jonas next morning. It was never his custom to eat a stout breakfast a quart measure of cider and a slab of cold meat were what he had usually—as his father before him—and he had them this morning He got his gear all together, and he was ready to start

There was some little discussion over taking the dog, in which Jonas won out. They took the dog Jonas brought his own ax, and Whit carried the auger. They had a chalk line and chalk—they had everything that they needed Whit told Melissa that they'd probably be back inside of a fortnight if nothing prevented. What he had in mind was, they'd be back in a week

She stood in the dooryard—and waved them into the forest.

Whit traveled ahead, Jonas well in back of him Jonas heeled the old dog, and they went a smart pace.

Within fairly wide limits, Whit took the same route that he'd taken before. He was trying to find the best going. When he was certain he had it, he was going to spot trees to mark it. C he got Melissa in there, he would want a road out for

cause it might happen sometime that he couldn't come out wi her himself. Or it might happen, too, that he'd want to come o in a hurry, and a road would help then.

Jonas, of course, could find his way round as well as Whi could, or better. Jonas had never been lost; he said so himsel He'd been puzzled sometimes to find the place he was lookin for, but he'd never been really what you could call "lost." Th closest he'd come to it that he could recall was one time in snowstorm when he'd got into a swamp. It had taken him tw days and a half trying to find his way out. He'd been awful col though.

They got to Whit's place a little bit after noon.

Jonas had never seen it before, and he had to take what Whi said about most of it now. It wasn't the best land there was in he province—for example, it didn't compare with Frye's land the Saco. But it was about as good land—Jonas admitted it aise of it—as Whit would probably get anywhere for th terms he had made And according to Whit, the lot had as much interval as a man would want to work, anyway. If the rest of it was hilly, why, that wouldn't matter so much as it would have perhaps if Whit had planned to sell off a piece.

Whit didn't tell Jonas about the sign he had seen. He didn't think it was necessary.

Whit's lean-to, however, Jonas praised highly. With a lean-to like that, a man could be comfortable winter or summer—a single man, that is—and not have to worry.

Whit showed him the logs.

"They look all right, Whit. You cut only good ones Well, to-morrow we'll start on her."

"We could start now. We got three hours' daylight—pretty close to it, anyhow."

"Two hours, more like it. I d'know as 'twould pay us. We could go down to this pond that you speak about, have a look round, and maybe get something for supper, though. You take like in th' mornin', if we had a nice deer, now, hung up right in front here, we could work pretty good. Not so good as I might

there was keg to go with it, but I ain't complainin'. I knowed you was a dry man t' work with before I come in here."

"You hadn't ought to complain, had you?—not after yesterday."

"Come on down t' th' pond."

"This's a fine time o' day to go deer huntin'!" Whit said.

"This's a fine time o' day t' start buildin' a house."

Whit saw it was hopeless. They went down to the pond.

But they didn't see any deer. They didn't see anything—except a gray squirrel, low down in a beech tree, and he didn't look to be any bargain in exchange for the powder Still, as Jonas remarked, "We ain't got t' pay any lead for him."

He sent the old dog round the other side of the tree, and when the squirrel came round to Jonas's side, all spraddled out and hugging the bark, Jonas was able to shoot into the tree trunk. He used a slug big enough to break a deer's foreshoulder—if the range was right, that is—but a very light charge When he picked up the squirrel, its head wasn't on it Whit went up the tree and pricked out the lead; it was all in one piece.

They ate the squirrel for supper—what there was of it. While they were eating it, Whit said he wondered if the guts of a gray squirrel made as good bait for a trap, if you rotted 'em right, as a red squirrel's did Jonas admitted that he didn't know; he'd always used red squirrel Whit said that *he* had They talked it all over, but they couldn't settle it It was a question of smell, so Jonas concluded, ". . . and smell is a thing a man don't know much about. All he can do is try this, that, and the other, and then see what happens."

"Well, we can't try it with this one, because the dog's et 'em."

"We couldn't anyhow; it's too late in the year. You got to bury 'em when it ain't too cold weather. If you don't, they won't rot. I bury my guts about the first of September. I bury a ... By the first of October, they're just about prime."

"And they'll keep all winter."

"Yes, sir, they will. They're a wonderful thing."

Whit yawned and stretched himself. He fixed

he and Jonas stepped out and took a look at the weather. Then they came back in the lean-to and lay down and slept.

The cold the next morning lay heavy about them. It was more than a threat of the coming of winter. It was the very thud of the footsteps of winter at hand. Near at hand, too—not much farther away than the other side of the mountain. Building a house seemed the natural thing for a man to be doing. It seemed so to both of them. And by the looks of the sky, by the feel of the air, and by the urge that was in them when they heard the wind blowing, they both of them knew that they hadn't much time. To Whit, it gave added excitement to a work that already was exciting enough. He was not only building—he was building a house for Melissa. Add to that now this great nearness of winter... winter rolling upon them, coming down off the mountain... and Whit and Jonas outwitting it right under its nose—well, it made the whole business as exciting as hunting. He spoke in a voice extra gentle and low; he saw tiny things clearly; he tried to move carefully. He had strength without limit.

Jonas worked fast. He could dovetail as prettily using only his ax as Whit could have done with a maul and a chisel. He was known for it.

Stopping a moment to put the stone to his ax, Jonas said cheerfully, "Time we get this finished, there won't be a bear on the mountain will be any more snug for the winter 'n you'll be."

Whit grunted, "Not many"—he was working the auger.

The soft slapping and hissing of Jonas's stone ran along with the words. "You take it with bears, though," Jonas observed, "I never heard of a he-one and she-one denning up for the winter in the same den together. You ever hear of it?"

"No," said Whit, "I don't think so."

"Neither did I." He went back to his dovetailing. Five minutes later—after nothing but work sounds—there was Jonas's voice again. "Nor I never heard of a bear den with a chimbley."

Whit snorted and grinned.

Whit was doing the hewing. Thrusting and twisting, he'd

ke a hole with the pod auger in the end of a log, set the log
t the pin on the horse, and snap a chalk line to go by, two
each side. Then he'd hew to the line.

Neither man had to wait much on the other.

Whit hadn't figured to lay any floor, so the first tier of logs—
r smoothing a place for them—they set right on the ground.
ey'd not last forever, but they weren't going to have to. If
ngs worked out here as they had other places, there'd be a
mill near by in two or three years, and then he'd have a house
t was built out of boards—boards for the floor and the roof
d the walls.

But in the meantime, he'd have a good log house. He'd have it
ht, and he'd have a chimney.

They worked all day long. There was no question of going off
nting.

Day after day, in fact, Jonas hung to it When they had the
lls up, and the ridgepole and rafters had all been put in place,
as discovered that he'd worked for five days He said that
norrow he was going to go hunting.

Whit said, go ahead.

"You don't need two men to work on a roof," Jonas explained,
nless you want someone to dance on the ridgepole, like this
s a rising."

"Well, you c'n try it. I'll pick you up if you land on your head"

"No, I'd ruther go huntin'."

"You go ahead, Jonas. You don't mind if I stay here 'n work
the roof?"

"You know how to lay it?"

"Pretty good—yes."

That was settled. Jonas—they had finished their supper—said,
Old Henry Cotton—he's dead and gone now—used to dance on
e ridgepole when I was a boy They got awful big barns in that
rt th' country. He didn't mind He'd get half full of rum, and
he'd go like a cat, 'n right out on that ridgepole the same
quirrel. 'N he'd jig up and down, 'n cut all kinds of ...
ey'd holler up at him. 'N then sometimes he'd teeter

his arms round to look like he was fallin', 'n all th' wo
squawk. I seen different ones since then, but he was the best."

"I seen two or three."

"They claim if you're born that way, it comes easy to you."

"Well, I know I wan't."

"Nor I wan't. 'N I ain't sure that he was. He never got kill'
it—he died of a sickness—but when they'd holler up at him,
never answered. 'Way I look at it, he didn't hear them. He d
see them. He didn't see nothin' only that ridgepole right und
his feet. That's why he could do it."

"Why did he do it? What was his reason?"

"Why, when he'd come down, they'd make a lot of him. I
was just the same that way as anyone else."

"Oh."

"Oh, often as not, I suppose," Jonas went on, so as not to m
too pointed, "the man owned the barn would give him
...nt."

"That would've made a lot better reason than the other
was."

"A better one, maybe, but not near as strong a one. Well, he
dead 'n gone now. He can't jig on no ridgepoles, whatever
reason."

"He ain't never come back?" Whit inquired.

"Not that I ever heard of."

"Sounds to me like the kind would be likely to, maybe."

"Yes, you'd think so, now, wouldn't you?" Jonas agreed. "B
I never heard tell of it."

"Time'd be likeliest, I should think," Whit said, "would b
after a risin', with a lot of 'em drunk, 'n comin' on dark, you'
think somebody'd see him up there on the ridgepole—jiggi
round like he'd used to—prob'ly better."

"Ayuh, it does seem so. Maybe they figured on that, and p
him extry deep when they buried him."

"That don't always work."

"No, it don't."

"Or another time they might see him, would be like after a in', and a man was goin' home alone maybe, he'd turn round d look—*then* he'd be likely to see him, up there on the ridge-e, if he looked toward the west and there was light in the sky. ittle man, was he?"

"I don't remember. I couldn't say. 'N I never heard of nobody in' home alone from a risin'. Not if they could help it. *I* ver did."

Whit said, "Whereabouts did you figure you might hunt to-rrow?"

They talked about that until they went to sleep.

Whit was glad to be working alone the next day He wasn't ed of Jonas, but he liked being alone.

June was the best time of year to get bark in, but still he did etty well. He had the roof more than half covered with three s fixed in place, when he heard Jonas holler. He knew Jonas d meat from the sound of his voice Whit then remembered at he hadn't eaten since breakfast. He hoped Jonas hadn't. hey'd have a feed now.

Jonas had forty pounds of meat over his shoulders. He'd ressed out a deer. It was a good one, he said, but he'd had to ork for it: four hours tracking clear up on to the mountain efore he'd got a shot that he thought was worth risking, and hen two miles more He'd broken the shoulder, but he hadn't ove it up really as much as he should have, because, so he hought, his wadding hadn't been tight enough; it had sounded hat way. The second shot was a good one

Whit examined the meat "That's awful nice meat. A doe, an't it?"

"Yes, and right up in shape. There's a half a hundredweight here."

"Easy," Whit said. "You done well, I c'n tell you."

"Yes, she's a good one. You got a good fire?"

"Fire's all ready."

"But I want to tell you, boy, you got more wolves in this p th' country than there is flies in a stable."

"This deer ain't been run any."

"You wait till winter!"

"You see any, did you?"

"You don't have to see 'em."

"*I ain't heard any for four or five nights.*"

"They're around all the same"

"Well . . ."

Jonas assured him, "I won't say nothin' t' your woman ab it, 'n I d' know as you'd better."

"She ain't scairt of a wolf."

"She might be of twenty"

"You don't know there is twenty."

Jonas swore. "Twenty! I bet you right now that if you h 'nough men to make a drive of it, say two hundred men, and good man for a captain, and you had any luck, you'd kill a hu dred. You'd get anyway fifty. I bet you'd get a hundred."

"When there's two hundred men in this town I'll send for yo You c'n be captain."

"I'll come, if you do. You c'n be the leftenant." Jonas notic the roof. "You ain't set around much."

"I got some of it done"

"*You done better than half of it.*"

"There's some ways to go yet."

Jonas went to inspect it. It was good work. He called out Whit, "She looks good to me, Whit Whyn't you get that me rigged to cook, 'n then while it's cookin', you come over here we c'n finish this row."

Whit said, "All right."

Jonas lasted another day, during which they got the roof fi ished, and then taking most of the deer meat, and with the do at his heels, Jonas went home.

Whit took his sled and went down to the brook after store They were more plentiful than the spruce trees had been. I

in the day collecting a pile of them—prying them out of the sand the banks of the brook. What he wanted was flat ones. He did the same thing the next day. That provided a pile bout the size of two haycocks. It looked like enough—so he ured tomorrow he could go after clay.

The following day, he made the cut in the wall. The topmost log in the wall he left as it was to keep the house tied together. Out of the next one below it, he cut a section the length of his ax handle—twenty-six inches; he used a handle longer than most—plus a handsbreadth besides. At that point the chimney, because of its tapering, would pass to the outside of the wall of the house. From here down to the sill, he kept widening the opening, taking out sections that were longer and longer. He had a line to go by. It became easier to work the farther down he progressed, because now he had room for the play of his ax. It would have been easier yet if they'd cut the logs first—to leave room for the chimney—before laying the wall up But that might have slowed them beyond Jonas's patience And Whit felt that the chimney was his business anyhow When it came right down to it, he didn't want any help From the beginning, he'd had a hankering to do the chimney himself

When he'd cut out the opening down to the sill, he put a notch in the sill four fingers deep and to the length of two ax handles; that would admit the full width of the hearth

Another day gone.

Between supper and sleep, he thought of what he was doing. He didn't know much about working with stone and with clay. And now that that was the next thing that he'd got to do, he didn't approach it any too eagerly. There were a good many questions that he should have asked Jonas It might be better if he were to go out there tomorrow and find out some of the answers before he made the mistakes There was going to be more to this business—now that he looked at it closely—than just laying the stones up and plugging with clay

No sooner he'd started choosing stones for the hearth, he saw he'd already done one stupid thing: he had piled

stones. If he had just dropped them spread out over the grou[nd] it would have been an awful lot easier to find the ones that [he] wanted. So he set to it and flung the pile all apart. But it [dis]turbed him to have been such a lunkhead. It made him [cautious] about the rest of the work.

He got the hearth laid, flush with the top of the sill, and without some excitement, started in on the walls

It didn't take long to discover that he was going to need much as a bushel of small bits of stones to wedge in under big ones to make the big ones set steady. He went to gather little stones until it was dark, getting them out of the bed of [the] brook. The excitement he'd felt upon starting the walls had disappeared.

The next day, however, he got along pretty well. He had [the wa]lls up two feet and a half, and they were solid and steady [He] could stand off and look on what he had done.

He ate his supper slowly and thoughtfully. "In this kind [of] work," he said to himself, "there are all kinds of things that [can] come up to block it."

He made up the fire, and then he lay down to sleep "Th[e] high sound of the wind is what it makes in the spruces, the low down sound is when it blows through a pine tree. When [you] hear the two of them, both together at once, it sounds pre[tty] good. Like it does now"

He fell asleep then . . and Melissa was with him.

Cautiously, but with confidence, he went at his work the ne[xt] morning. "If I make a mistake, I'll have to start over. The [top] part of this chimbley will rest on the bottom part; you get th[e] bottom part wrong, and your whole chimbley's done for

"And another thing is- you got to be awful nice when you['re] workin' with stone. You can't leave any play. Every piece you p[ut] in has got to fit snug and solid. You leave any teeter anywhere [in] it, and the whole thing'll come down on you." Shifting th[e] stones, laying them this way and that way, end for end may[be]

-ning them over, he went ahead slowly. It was solid and

He had now within him sufficient resolve so that there was doubt in his mind but what it would stand against anything. He let it. He let it stand against hunger—not taking the to go after meat—and he let it stand against weariness: there was light, he scarcely stopped for a second. When he down at night, he could touch the edge of sleep only—and that would go from him before it was morning. While he sleeping, he would dream he was working.

He kept it up this way for three or four days, or it may have five—he wasn't quite certain. All day and all night, he that chimney in front of his eyes, and he had the feel of the on the flat of his fingers. It was getting up pretty high . . .

Up on the roof, he worked more than ever like a man in a . He had the chimney pretty near finished. He hadn't eaten a day and a half, but that didn't matter Because an odd thing happened: he didn't need to eat any more.

He put the last stone in place, and he knew he had finished it and he knew what to do next. He must get down off the roof onto the ground. He lay down on his belly, and slid down to edge, hung his legs over, and dropped off to the ground. He ed weakly and heavily, staggered backwards a step or two the hard, trampled snow among the stones and the rocks he'd lying about, and his heel catching a rock, he fell over back-ds.

His head struck on rock, and he lay there—loose-jointed, conscious.

Jonas had left home before daylight that morning He'd told women that he was going off hunting—he'd be back tomor-, most likely His wife had inquired what he was going , and Jonas had said, "I d' know, Ida . . . I just thought huntin' . . ." She didn't have to catch his eye, then. She

where he was going. Whit was overdue now; it was up to J
to look for him.

After Jonas had gone, Melissa said to her, "He's gone to se
anythin's happened to Whit, ain't he?"

"Yes," Mrs. Moore answered.

Jonas had come within a mile of Whit's place when, watch
the dog, he knew that Whit—or at any rate someone that
dog knew and liked—must be just up ahead. Major pricked
his ears, stood perfectly still, and then wagging his tail went
to meet them.

Jonas followed and listened—but he didn't hear anyone sp
to the dog. As he came round a shoulder, he saw Whit com
toward him—no gun, no nothing, just walking slowly and t
dog walking beside him looking up at him.

Jonas slowed down, and then he stood there and waited.

Whit came almost up to him before Jonas spoke. "He
Whit."

That stopped him.

"*How you been, Whit?*"

There was no sign in Whit's face that he'd ever seen Jonas
"Where's M'lissa?" Whit asked, his voice dull with no lif
it.

"She's out to my place"—but Jonas still couldn't tell whet
Whit knew him or not.

There were only two things that could make a man act t
way Whit was one was a crack on the head, and the other w
being just drunk enough Whit must have got a crack on t
head.

"Where's your gun, Whit?"

Whit didn't answer. He said in the same voice, "I finished
chimbley."

"Well, *that's good*," said Jonas.

"Where's M'lissa?"

"She's out t' my place," Jonas repeated. "You c'n tell
it soon as we get there." Jonas spoke loudly, as he would

man. But it didn't help any—Whit said again that he'd fed the chimney.

has swore pleasantly. "It damn near finished you, Whit. happened, anyhow? A rock fell on your head?"—there o blood at all on him, but he looked awful poorly, and there he smell and the look of hunger about him.

hit started to speak—but Jonas forestalled him. "Come on," ordered, "I'll take you to Melissa."

e had Whit turned around inside fifty yards—Whit not ecting—and he led him back to Whit's place

hit had stopped talking.

nas didn't quite want to take him into the house because ng that chimney so on his mind, if he was to see it, it might im off again.

stead, he guided Whit into the lean-to—told Whit to lie n, and helped him to do so. It was then that he felt the great on Whit's head. "We'll lay here for tonight," Jonas said im—although it was plain Whit didn't know where he was, d then in the morning, we c'n go on to Melissa."—"And I e to God," he said to himself, "that I don't have to haul you."

Whit lay there quietly and Jonas kindled a fire. Whit's fire s cold—it didn't look to have had any wood on it, so Jonas ged carefully, since day before yesterday. He set some water heat and threw in a handful of the corn he had with him and piece of salt pork. There wasn't a mouthful of food of Whit's ywhere round. Jonas was puzzled Whit's gun was in shape, d he had powder and lead Jonas stepped across to the house have a look round for some sign or other that would tell him hat had happened.

As a tracker, Jonas was better than average The water he'd ft on the fire hadn't any more than come to a boil before—out back of the house—Jonas was bending over a stone that had ome of Whit's hairs on it. "Didn't strike it quite fair, his l dn't, you see," Jonas told himself carefully. And he added ought, "Just as well, I guess, prob'ly."

"Well," he said, squatting down so that he could thi

"here's where he come by that bump on the head, and that knocked him out of his senses. But that don't account for his bein' so hungry, because this happened this mornin'. Them little snow pieces"—he nodded toward them—"that's set up on edge where he tried to stand up, they're fresh 'n sharp as can be—they ain't had no sun on 'em since they was turned up—" he glanced at the shadow cast by the house—"but they're goin' t' get it in about half an hour. It could have happened at night from the way the snow is, but if he'd come out here at night he'd have had something with him, like a stick or his gun, because he'd heard something stirrin'. He fell down empty-handed, or else what he'd had with him would be layin' here yet I should think it would, anyhow. No, sir, this happened this morning.

"He didn't lay here long, either. he ain't melted the snow that was under him any.

"Well, if it happened this mornin', why in hell's he so hungry? From the smell of his breath and the looks of his tongue, he ain't et a morsel since day before yesterday. Why was that?"

There was no answer.

"Well, he's hungry, 't any rate, so I guess I better go feed him."

The thin, greasy liquor seemed to be just what Whit wanted. He sucked it in greedily. Jonas didn't let him have much, and then made him lie down again. "You hang on to that, 'n you c'n have some more later. Your stummick's all shriveled up. You got to let it soak for a while and kind of unfurl itself afore you try to fill it. You know that 's well as I do. Don't you?"

Whit lay quiet.

"Sart'n you do," Jonas assured him—and went out and left him.

He found where Whit had been up on the roof. That was done this morning.

Jonas did some more figuring. "If he was up on the roof he went up there to work. If he was up to workin' on chimbleys he was up to takin' his gun 'n lookin' for somethin' to eat. Why didn't he do it? His food must have run out as much as ... days ago, because after that he eat up what he should ...

him if he'd went off to hunt or if he'd set out for my place. Yet he didn't do neither one of them things. He just stayed on here. Well, let's see if he did— When did it snow? days ago, wan't it?" He walked a small circle round the and the lean-to. There wasn't a footprint crossing it any—except where Whit had come out today, and Whit and at had come back again.

...as came back to the lean-to, shaking his head. He fed again, and then went back to the chimney. He stood ...ed up against it, leaning his weight on it through his out-...ed right arm, and looking down at the ground. "He's ...d on this steady for the last four days anyhow—from the ...his snow is trampled—and prob'ly longer. All of that time, ...s gettin' more 'n more hungry, but he wouldn't give over ...n' and go off 'n try to get nothin'. I don't understand it. ...he's got a nice chimbley." He turned to inspect it. "Yes, an ... nice chimbley. He done better work, hungry, than most ... have, fed. I hope when she sees it she'll have sense enough ...l him she likes it—if she ever does see it. If his head is ...up . . . But I think it ain't, prob'ly. There ain't any blood ...s ears or his eyes; there wan't any blood round his nose, for ...matter. No, sir, if she don't tell him to his face that this chimbley right here is the god-damnedest chimbley she ...see in *her* life—then her head's worse 'n his is—" he turned ...he dog—" 'n I don't think it is"

...ter on in the evening, Whit seemed to sleep evenly, and ...s decided he would sleep some himself. If Whit were right ...is head when he wakened next morning, Whit would want ...tart going. "Long as he ain't got his senses, he'll do the ...sible thing—which is lay quiet and rest." Jonas sat by the ... "Hes a rugged young feller—'n I guess all his life he's ...n more or less hungry for one thing and another. ...lissa?' he says t' me. 'Where is M'lissa?' He had to fi... ...inished t' chimbley Where is M'lissa?' God, if he ...it bad, why didn't he come out 'n see her?—'stead

round here t' finish t' chimbley. *She* hadn't said to him 'It's bley or nothin'.' Nor he hadn't promised her. He ain't the to say what he will do—not till after he's done it. He make his mind, 'n then he goes 'n does it, 'n then he says—at the he says, 'Well, I done *it,* I guess'—'n then he don't even drunk. *I* couldn't live that way!

"I say to Ida, 'I promise you, this time, that I'll get a Then if I come home with a mushrat, she ain't disappointed knows I done what I could for her: I *tried* for a b'ar.

"What he should have done was to have said all along to 'Now, you take it easy I don't mind tellin' you that when round to it, I'm goin' t' build you one hell of a chimbley.' Th he could have gone at it in a sensible way. Why, he would have had to have started it maybe until along in the spring

Jonas concluded that he would turn in. He put some wood the fire, and then went and bent over Whit—who was sleeping heavily. "He smells better to me 'n what he did be —'n I don't smell any fever." He touched the back of his hand Whit's forehead. "No, I think he's all right."

And Jonas prepared to lie down himself. He checked him suddenly—and went over and put his own *blanket on W* "There now, I almost forgot—that was what I brought the th for."

Then he lay down a little nearer the fire, and he called the to him. "Here, you, Major, lay down. No—right here. You down. That's right. Now stay quiet. You'll do me as good a *blanket would maybe—if you c'n only stay quiet.*"

He sank quickly toward sleep "Ida'll be awful glad," thought to himself, "if I c'n bring him out there in good sha *tomorrow.* I didn't dare promise her—I didn't dare tell her but she knew all the same what it was I'd come after."

. . . and a half-minute later, "You know, he has got an awf *nice* chimbley." And Jonas settled in sleep.

The pain in his head was the first thing Whit was aware of flowed forward in waves from the back of his head and

inside of his forehead. He knew what had hit him. Falling, the painless white flash as his head struck the rock, were ent and clear to him. He knew now that he'd been knocked for, he supposed, a second or two.

He opened his eyes against darkness, but expected that to clear moment—and then he saw the light of the fire on the back he lean-to. While he was trying to figure that out, a great ghing roar filled everything near him.

Helpless and terrified, Whit lay perfectly still. His head now clearing. He recognized facts as fast as he could: he was g on his side facing the back of the lean-to; it was in the ht now, the fire was going; he was under a blanket—and then great sound that was near him broke and tumbled and fell to hispering. He suddenly knew it—he'd heard it often enough was Jonas's snoring. Whit sniffed to make certain—yes, was Jonas's blanket.

Then he let go of himself, he couldn't hang on any longer. He mbled and shook, his face shaped itself in a grin of relief, and was half crying, too.

Jonas started in a new cycle—finished it—and began on other.

Whit began taking stock of things. This pain in his head was fearful thing surely, but here, somehow, was Jonas, and between the two of them they'd be able to take care of whatever it s that had happened. Jonas's being asleep meant that things uldn't be too bad.

Whit got a hand out from under the blanket and located the mp on the back of his head . . . She was a good one! A half ch lower down and she'd have stove in his head properly.

Well, here was some good luck to balance the bad luck. That made him feel better. It meant that he wasn't marked for a long pell of bad luck. It might even be he was in for some good luck because whatever it was that was bringing him good luck een right on the job when he needed it most: it had his head from being stove in, and then right on top

had brought Jonas in to him. Two things like that didn't hap right in a row without something was causing them. Whi comforted.

The pain made his eyelids close, and it had started the swea his hands. But the rest of him was cold. He discovered now h two blankets—one of them his own, the other one Jonas's; he was cold.

If he had Jonas's blanket, Jonas didn't have any.

Whit didn't like that. It made it appear that he was a s man. He wasn't sick—all he had was headache. He *felt* like a s man—he felt sick enough so that he didn't dare to give in to He felt so sick that if he didn't do something to pretend that wasn't sick, why, this pain in his head would get the best of hi Then where would he be?

He'd got to do something

He knew what he'd do· he'd take this extra blanket and p on Jonas. If he could do that, he'd have shown this pain in h head which was the better, himself or the pain. He'd have it be then, and he'd not have to worry about it, because sooner or la it would go away from him.

He raised his head up, hung on for a moment . . . and the couldn't make it. He settled back, and the pain surged throug him fiercely. It was the worst that he'd ever known. It was li having the toothache in the whole of his head. He had a fol of the blanket squeezed tight in his hand.

Pretty soon it let up some.

Whit said to himself, "Well, if that's the worst it can do, think I can make it."

He gathered himself—and tried again. This time he ke going He got Jonas's blanket off him to begin with, and h rolled free of his own. Then he got himself up on his elbows an knees, hung there a moment—and had to fall back again. B he'd made a start, and that was big in his mind while he la there . . . and in a minute or two, he was able to get up agai

Crawling along, dragging the blanket, he got over to Jona The dog was awake and thumped h[illegible] [illegible]ntly. But w

dn't take any notice. His stomach was turning over and over de him. He dragged the blanket up over Jonas and started to his place.

le made it, and lay face down by the fire alongside his own ket. His breath was coming unevenly in little short jerks and idn't quite know what was going to happen next to him. But new that he'd made it. Whatever happened, he had that eneath him. He'd proved he wasn't sick.

ut this headache was worse than he'd ever dreamed of. It t back and forth from his head to his feet, and it worked him everywhere in between, too If it didn't get better by ning, he would have trouble walking.

He got his blanket around him, and close to the fire he lay and waited.

The pain slacked up a good deal, and also he got used to it. He made no effort to think, and his brain flapped around sely—it touched on Melissa, and some things back in Kettle-l, and he remembered his chimney—and none of these things med of any importance He was breathing steadier now.

He slipped into sleep . . .

When he wakened next morning he had on both the blankets. Jonas was tending the fire. He had about four times as much e as he generally would

Whit watched him awhile without saying anything, and then hen Jonas had his back turned, Whit sat up. His head throbbed retty hard, but still nothing to speak of compared to last night. e pushed off the blanket and got to his feet It seemed to him r a moment that he was a long way from the ground, and he asn't so steady as he might have been What his stomach might o was anyone's guess He was on his feet, though He wasn't ick!

Jonas looked up "Well!" he said, "'bout time you was up' Whit grinned—and commented, "That's an awful big "Roast 'n ox," Jonas said, and turned to the fire. relieved and delighted that he could have shouted. Wh of the blanket had not reassured him. Whit could h

while still out of his head. "Set down 'n take comfort, somethin' t' eat. You ain't eat no more'n was good for you last two-three days, have you?"

"Maybe not—I d'know."

"Well, then, you better begin. Set down, damn it, will you."

Whit sat down—carefully. He felt kind of squeamish but food smelled good in spite of that. He guessed he could hold "How'd you leave the women?"

"Good," Jonas said, "both of 'em" He had johnnycake and some smoked moose meat he'd brought along with him. Fresh meat would have been better. He started Whit on johnnycake

The food tasted good to Whit, and it seemed to settle stomach. He ate almost half of what he would ordinarily, then he had to quit. He just couldn't seem to hold his head any longer.

Both he and Jonas had eaten in silence.

"You go and lay down again," Jonas commanded. "You'll get the good of that food pretty soon, and then you'll feel better."

"I feel better now."

"Maybe you do, but it ain't the food done it. You think it but it ain't. It takes some little time t' get the good out of food. If you was to vomit that now I could show you: it wouldn't be any different from what it did when you swallered it. I seen that happen. That's how I know."

Whit lay down in the lean-to. It seemed to him wonderful good to lie down. He would lie here awhile an started. "When'd you get here?" he asked.

"Yesterday noontime."

"I guess I was out of my head."

"You seemed like it, yes."

"I fell on a rock."

"That's what I figured."

"Where was I?—layin' there?"

"Yes," Jonas said.

"Good thing you come, I guess."

"Oh, you'd a come to, prob'ly—sooner or later."

"Maybe—but not under two blankets nor close to a fire."

"Did you put that blanket on me?" Jonas inquired. "I hoped dog done it. I figured if you done it, you must a still a been of your head. He's an awful good dog." He tossed a piece of it. The dog caught it with a snap and swallowed it whole.

"I c'n travel," Whit said.

"You could," Jonas answered without turning round, "if we a stagecoach run from here out to my place. You ain't go'n walk, though—not today, I c'n tell you. Tomorrow, you ght."

"I feel pretty good."

"Yes," said Jonas, "you look good. Jeems Chris', Whit, be sible!"

"I c'n make it all right."

"You ain't go'n' t' try. You're go'n t' stay right where you be the rest of today, 'n tomorrow we'll see. You could start, I mit. Hell, anybody c'n start. You might get there, too—if I s to lug you. And what do you figure my woman would say me for lettin' you start?—or yourn either, for that matter."

"I said I'd be out there some time before this."

"You should a thought o' that a week ago, Whit."

There was a silence—while Jonas thought maybe he shouldn't ve said that. He heard a noise and looked round

Whit was standing in front of the lean-to "I'm settin' out,' e said.

Jonas stood up—and then turned to the fire He kicked i part. "All right," he said, "I'm comin' with you"

12

IDA MOORE and Melissa had sat up later that evenin than there was any occasion for. Mrs. Moore had the little whe up by the fire, and Melissa, across from her, was knitting a stocl ing. It was Mrs. Moore's wool, and it would be Mrs Mo stocking. Melissa, as guest, was doing the work on it.

The wheel stopped for a moment . . . and the sound of th
wind was loud in the chimney.

Ida Moore remarked briskly, "I'm goin' t' bed. My eyes ai
so good as they used t' be, really. I'd ought t' spin in the daytim
But you don't get enough daytime this time of year t' get an
thing done in. You'd better come t' bed, too. They won't be ba
tonight."

"No, I guess they won't, now. It's been dark for five hou
Whit can travel at night, but I hope he ain't, in a way. What'
you think?—I shouldn't wonder they'd be here tomorrow." S
went on with her knitting

"Maybe," Ida Moore said She was putting the wheel aw
"But I wouldn't figure on Jonas. If he was on his way home an
he come on a moose track between Beede's and here, he'd ru
off to follow it and not come back for a week. He done that on
Truly. He didn't get the moose, either." There was no truth i
his, but that didn't matter

The girl tried to laugh as well as she could. I guess Whi
the same way. Oh, I ain't worried at all—not now, I ain't, an
how. If there'd a been anything wrong when your husband g
in there, he'd a come back right away." There was no truth i
this either.

"That's right," Ida Moore said.

"Prob'ly what they have done," Melissa continued, "is go o
hunting together."

"I shouldn't wonder." She stood over Melissa and looked dow
at her work. "You turn a nice heel."

"I never done much. One set of hosen'll last a Kettleford
woman a good many years. I never had any until I was grown
From mudtime to snowfall I always went barefoot. Other times
moccasins. If I'd gone more to church, I'd have had to have boots
William Cauldwell, the cordwainer, said he'd make me some
once, if Pa'd find the leather. Whit can tan leather and fashion a
moccasin. But he can't make a boot. Still, I guess I won't need
any, not for church, for a while yet."

No, I guess you won't, prob'ly."
This here is nice wool."
That's Gilmanton wool. We ain't got any sheep, yet—or
el Beede ain't, rather. I ain't sure that Jonas 'd make much
shepherd."
Why is that?" said Melissa.
Why ain't there sheep here to Sandwich? Not enough pas-
I guess, is the main reason. I couldn't say" She could have
e'd wanted to: wolves were the reason.
It's nice wool to work with."
You come on to bed, child."
Let me finish this heel."
No, you come on to bed." She laid her rough hand on Me-
's fair head. "They won't come any sooner for your settin' up
un'. Time you been married as long as I have, you'll have give
r waitin'."
Melissa wound up the ball. "I done enough waitin' before I
married so's I'd ought t' be used to it" She laid the stocking
e. "I guess I ain't awful patient."
You're patient enough," Ida Moore said, and turned to cover
fire "Trouble with you is, you know that you're patient.
hat I always do about Jonas when he don t come back is say,
at the old fool!' and go on with my work. He always turns
—he always has so far."
"Yes," Melissa said bravely, "so has Whit, for that matter"
Then let's us go to bed."
The room had grown darker while she was covering the fire
th ashes—but it wasn't quite dark, there was a flame or two
ft, about enough to make shadows
"Hark!"—and Melissa held up her hand
Ida Moore crouched on the hearth—not even moving a finger.
he couldn't hear anything. After a while, she relaxed and turned
und to Melissa. The girl nodded, still listening . . . and t'
id in a whisper, "I thought I heard someone holler."
Ida Moore listened some more Except for the

no sound at all—not even the water down by the landing shadows were large . . . and so was a little pricking noise h the fire.

"An owl, I guess, wan't it?" Mrs. Moore said.

The girl shook her head.

Mrs. Moore stood up then, and strode toward the door. "It a been some kind of a sump'n," she said very definitely. "A or a weasel, perhaps, got a rabbit. It was too late for a loon. "T wouldn't get in here this time in the night"—she meant Jo and Whit.

She stepped out through the door and let the skins fall in b of her. She listened, turning her head . . . no . . . not a sou Only the wind. Wait—she heard the soft thumping of an an running.

If it hadn't been for Melissa, she'd have backed into the hou ne stood her ground, and heard him come nearer. She w scared, all right, yes. And then she knew what it was. It was t old dog coming home. "Major!" she called. "Where you bee you rascal!" And she called to Melissa, "Here's the dog, anyhow

"Yes," said Melissa—she was standing right there behind he

"My stars, but you give me a start! I thought you was back the house."

"I come out when you did."

"Well, you stood awful quiet."

"I was listenin'."

The dog came up to them, happy but tired, and as soon a Mrs. Moore'd patted him, he went on into the house.

"Hark—" said Melissa, "I heard him again."

"Yes, I did, too, that time."

"That wasn't Whit's voice."

"No, that was Jonas. He always hollers when he gets near the house. Well, I guess we better go in and perk up the fire. I don't know about Whit, but Jonas'll want something hot." She went into the house. Whit was alive anyhow, or Jonas wouldn't hav hollered.

Melissa peered into the darkness that lay on the clearing

w just where they would come from, but she couldn't hear voices. If there were two of them they ought to be talking.

Then close at hand there was Jonas's voice, "Evenin', Mis' in'ston."

I can't see you. Where are you? Whit—are you there?"

He's here, right enough. Whit: speak to your woman."

Whit said, "Hello—" but it didn't sound like him.

Melissa moved forward into the darkness—and then all of a dden they all three stood together. She could see better now. t Whit didn't come toward her—he was holding his head up, t he still didn't speak. Melissa stared at him. "Whit—what's e matter?"

"Whit's kinda tuckered," Jonas explained. "We come quite a ys. He ain't had any rum, if that's what you're thinkin'—nor in't, for that matter, I'm sorry to say. Well, you got here, didn't u, boy?" And without waiting an answer, he said to Melissa, He can tell you about it. I'm goin' in 'n see Ida."

Jonas found his wife busy with bellows and poker before a uckening fire. She heard him come in. "Well, Jonas," she said. "How you been?—all right?"

"Ayuh, we been all right."

He set down Whit's gun and his own, and the other things e'd been carrying. "I want t' tell you," he announced with some ervor, "a more pigheaded youngster than that fool in th' clearin' never see in my life."

"Well, you don't need to tell *him* so. He's right outside, ain't he?"

"Tell him!" said Jonas. "All day I been tellin' him!" He came up to the fire. "I been callin' him every last thing I could think of since we set out this mornin' from that camp of his in there. You know how we been travelin'?" And in a much quieter tone, "That rum hot yet, is it?"

"Twill be in a minute."

"Ten rod 'n then stop!" He went back to his story. "... he was good for—a little more on the level now 't —but uphill or down 'bout ten rod was the l' .

'damn it, lay down 'n rest, will ye?' But he wouldn't do it; b *hang on to a tree for a little spell maybe, 'n then he'd go on agai* He knowed well as I did if he was t' lay himself down, h wouldn't get up again—nor till tomorrow."

"He been hurt, has he, Jonas?"

"Yes, he's been hurt! Fell off his roof 'n lit on his head, 'n guess he'd a stove his head in if he hadn't been lucky. Ha pened 'fore I got in there. He was out of his head until some t in the night last night. 'N then first thing this *mornin'* he'd g to travel! All day, we been at it, just like I told you. Why, h *wouldn't even stop at Poole's house*—we come right handy to and I wanted a glass—nor he wouldn't stop in at Beede's All h would say was 'I guess I'll keep a-goin'.' Do you know what w drivin' him?" Jonas demanded. "He was afeard she'd be wo ried about him! 'Jeems Christ A'mighty,' I said to him, 'Whit, I ... sense than you got the day I was married.'"

"You was worried yourself enough to go look for him."

"*Well, I found him, all right! How is that now?*—hot enoug is it?"

"I shouldn't wonder."

"I guess I'll call 'em in." He stepped toward the door. "He's too tuckered out t' have t' leave 'em alone. You been all right, have you, while I was away?"

"Yes," Mrs. Moore said.

Melissa saw the light suddenly come from the doorway as Jonas drew back the skins.

"We can go in there to live," Whit said, "any time *that you're* ready."

Jonas called to them.

13 WHIT MADE two trips to carry in meal, and then about noon of a bright day in December, they *finally left Jonas's.* Ida Moore was the one to whom the parting came hard. I

only knew the place where they were going, but he also knew t sometime during the winter he'd find himself near there d he'd stay a night or two with them. But Ida Moore knew t it would be eight miles in the snow, counting both ways, to de's if she felt that she'd got to have a woman to talk to. Still, was more cheerful than anyone else, or at any rate she ap-red to be, and there was no question whatever but what she s more businesslike.

Jonas smoked more than usual, and he twitted Whit a good al but without much success.

Whit's spirits were low. When they'd left Kettleford, with whole trip before him and the odds not any too good on their tting there safely, he'd felt quiet and confident. Now that he'd me as close as this to his goal, he was jumpy and irritable. He fused to believe that something wouldn't go wrong. A half zen times over he made up the pack of things he was to carry. nd he couldn't eat any dinner.

When they were ready to leave, Ida Moore found a chance to y to Melissa, "Any time that you need me, you send him out ter me."

"I will, Mis' Moore."

"Well, you see that you do. You be on your way, now. Whit ems kind of impatient."

Jonas came up. "He'll quiet down when he's carried that load ways. Mis' Livin'ston, you come again, will you? And you'll ear me holler outside your house sometime or other 'fore the inter's gone by."

"I hope so," Melissa said. "You've been awful good to us."

"Maybe Ida has; I ain't. Good luck to you, now." He turned round to Whit, who was shouldering his burden. Jonas helped him to settle it. "There now, that set all right?"

"Yes, sir—feels good. Y'know, Jonas, I—"

"Y'know the way, do you, now? You ain't go'n t' git lo—?"

"I guess I c'n find it. I d' know as I'll ever get square wi—all you done for us."

"Well I d' know as I want you to. Go on, no—

Don't stand around talkin'. Anyone'd think you was g Canady. Hell, it ain't more 'n a step in to your place. I coul in there 'n back between breakfast 'n noontime. Go on, a good luck to you."

"Well, I guess we had better. M'lissa, you ready?"

"I'm all ready."

"Good-by, Mis' Moore."

"Good-by, Whit." And she couldn't help adding, "Take care of her, now."

"Try to," he said.

They set off on the path—Whit going first—that cr Jonas's patch of wild hay and that cut through the middle o acre of stump corn. The sun had melted to mud the frost in field except for a patch on the side of each cornhill. They w up a slight rise and into the woods for the four miles of up would bring them to Beede's. Whit stepped out of the p turned to Melissa. "I guess you better go first. Then we w go no faster 'n what you've a mind to."

"*If I could go as fast as I'd like to, you couldn't keep up.*" stepped ahead of him.

"Don't worry—I'll get there."

It wasn't dark in the woods; there was sunlight all round the Here it was mostly basswood and maple, with scattering he locks and occasional spruces There were oaks, too, their lea all turned to brown and thinned out overhead. They'd be the when spring came, some of them would. Right in here, for so reason, there were not any pine trees. And the trees were all t trees. The gray trunk of a basswood, for example, would run seventy feet before there was a single branch on it. The same w true of the maples. The trees were the shape of long, taperi candles, with away up at the top a tuft of bare branches. A ma living in Portsmouth who'd never been back into the fore could come pretty close to the shape of the trees if he took candle—say half a cloth yard in length—and top of it. If he had a big enough fist that wo him how much was trunk and how much w

own on the ground, it would be as much as eight or ten s from the trunk of one tree to the trunk of the next tree est to it. Melissa could see a long ways. In a good many ctions, she could see just as far as she could have in the n. Other directions, there'd be a big boulder that hid what behind it, or there might be a row of young saplings getting art on the moss-covered hump where an old tree had fallen; y were spindly things, generally: they had to hurry their wing, they had to try to get up to the sunlight that came ough the hole overhead—that the old tree had left for them efore that hole was closed up.

Whit said, "When we get t' th' top th' hill just this side o' de's you can come pretty near seein' where it is that we're n'."

Can we? Let's hurry!"

Take it easy; we'll get there. You can see, too, the whole ge of the mountains There's a little pond down in there— k off the top of the hill—and it opens the woods up so you n see pretty good Would you like to see it?"

"Sart'n I would!"

"This path don't go by it, but Jonas told me about it, and I nt down in t' th' pond once to look at it. It ain't only a step. or we ain't hard pressed for time, really—not at the rate you en goin'. You ain't figurin' t' get there tonight, are you? You n't changed your mind, have you, about layin' at Poole's ouse?"

"No I ain't changed my mind any. I still know I could a done e whole trip in one day But you was bound 'n determined to put it into two days—so that's what we're doin'. I ain't changed my mind!"

"Well, when we get to th' top this hill, you'll have come three mile from Jonas's, and it'll be three more to Poole's place. Wh ou stand on the top, if you still wish in your legs that ifteen more miles to travel, then I'll say I was wrong."

When she got to the top of the hill, she was a little

breath and her color was high. But she was undeniably hap
and it did Whit good to look at her.

"You come along pretty spry," he said, "for a woman fixe
way you be."

"I told you I could."

"Yes. Well, here's where we turn off t' go down t' that p

"Don't you want to lay off your load?—'n then pick i
again when we come back?"

"No, we ain't comin' this way. We c'n cut acrost from d
in here to the pond that's in back of Beede's 'n strike the
again there."

Melissa didn't quite understand it—because he had faile
explain that there were two ponds.

They went down through the trees. And when they had c
almost to the shore of the pond, Whit said, "There, about h
If you go right down t' th' edge, the trees on the other si
come up too high for you. Just look out there, will you?"

She saw the mountains.

From well to her left they ranged low on the sky clear aro
to her right. She was startled to know that all along they l
been there and she hadn't felt them. She felt them now. Th
seemed to be nothing that separated her from them. The sun
upon them—and between the sun and the mountains there
nothing else, either.

She turned and looked up at Whit—he smiled down at l
and nodded—and together they turned and went on with th
journey.

Whit shifted his load a little, easing his shoulders. He h
never felt better.

He cut around Beede's, having no special reason to stop the
at the moment, and about two miles beyond that, as the d
turned to dull whiteness—losing the yellow and sparkle that h
been in it at noontime and giving way to the soft chill of mi
afternoon that in an hour or two would turn into dusk—
came to Poole's clearing and his house in
was an older man and could remember the

nearer to his house than a good thirty yards in any direc-
Here they would lie for the night—and Melissa was glad

ld man Poole lived alone. There was one bed in his house—
old, solid rope bed. In it Melissa lay sleeping

was now a half hour since she had retired, but Whit and the man sat up by the fire. Whit sat on a stool, his chin in his ds; Poole was in his own chair. For a time, they'd been dis- ing the state of the province. Whit hadn't made a very good wing. About all he could contribute were small items of fact, gs he knew of himself mostly, such as prices and crops and amount of game in the woods, what towns were now settling, how hard it was for a man to get any powder that he could ly depend on These things, he supposed, might all of them to make up the state of the province, but he thought of them rately and one at a time—which was the way he encountered m.

Poole liked to lump things together, and then to claim that cause had brought about all of them "For the last five or six rs," he said, "pioneers has been thicker in the northern part New Hampshire than fleas on a Frenchman Why is that, can u tell me? You're a sample yourself Why are you movin'?"

Well, I guess the main reason is it didn't seem to work out ht for me to try it to Kettleford."

Poole made no further inquiry. "Same way with the rest of m," he said approvingly. "It ain't the new land that is bringin' m—not in to this country Hell, because land is new ain't so uch in its favor. You can grow more in a field than you can in forest. They most of 'em come because they wanted to leave"

"That might be the way of it, I couldn't say. It was that way with me, surely."

"Whyn't they start comin' in here fifteen years ago?— mean all comin' to once, like what it is now."

"On account the Indians?" Whit said uncertainly. osed that was it. Twenty years ago, though, the moving hadn't greatly concerned him.

"No!" Poole was emphatic. "Indians, anyhow, didn't ... ones that was in here. And there was quite a few people all through here then—scattering ones, I admit, and not ... round here as there was to the south further. But quite a ... the same. Some of them *never* had no trouble from Ind... Some of 'em did. But it wan't like the Indians was on their ... the whole time. Why, it'd be two 'n three years at a time ... there wouldn't *nobody* would get kill't by an Indian—or ... run off to Canady.

"Indians was scarce—the woods wan't so full of them ... had to go a long ways when you set out to look for 'em. Lov... did, didn't he?—though you wouldn't remember. That was ... years ago, that was. Well, he did, all the same. My father told ... my uncle went with 'em He never come back. They could ... go a long ways after Indians. You know what was in ... hundred pounds for each scalp. That shows they was sc... don't it? The price wouldn't be that high for anything tha... plentiful. You done some trappin', you know that's well ...

"Why even Rogers and them fellers went with him had ... clean to St. Francis before they come on a nest of 'em. Tha... long ways.

"I've knowed this country longer'n you have. The fl... rattlesnakes, the wolves and ... milk s... mer 'n measles in March, a... any one of 'em enough by... here if they wanted to. All ... the ones that did come. So w... ones that's *now* comin'?

"Ten years ago, it was, R... done a good job since then, ... dians. But tha... years a... years ago th... now. Not a b... settlin'.

"What were...

back; the war didn't amount to much after 1760; and there hard times to boot—there was a hell of a drought there for years a-runnin', 'n that fire round Rochester—you'd think od many people would've quit 'n come north. But they didn't e. The towns had been granted—why, Benning had granted, he year '61, three-score of townships on the west bank th' —Connecticut River—'n close to twenty on this side. No-y moved into 'em—not right away. Why didn't they, eh? tell you, boy: money. They was waitin' for money to get s work."

That may be so," Whit conceded politely. In 1760, he'd been ten years old.

Money!" said Poole. "That's what's settlin' this country. Why old Uncle Benning, his Majesty's Governor and a son of a h—your wife's asleep, ain't she?—grant the land in the first e? Because he was paid to. Not by the King. The King nted it granted so's t' get things t' goin'—I d' know, I sup-e—and Benning, he granted it: to the ones that would pay . Th' wan't a batch of Proprietors got an inch of land in this vince that didn't pay Benning first. Then he'd turn right und 'n make them give him a share of what they'd just paid h for. He was a beauty!

"Well, then the Proprietors had to pay out some more money for running out lines 'n layin' out roads, because even a pi-eer wants to know where he is at. Them things cost money, d it's the Proprietors' money a pioneer hasn't got any money."

This was too true for Whit to be interested.

"All right. The town's ready. Now who's go'n t' settle it? ople own cows 'n tools, and a place, are well fixed where they , ain't they? They don't want to move, do they? The ones are illing to move are the ones that ain't got nothin'. They can't ove, either: they can't afford to. They c'n get along pretty good a town where there's people to work for. But if you're " . . . go pioneerin', you got to have stuff of your own, : ou got to have a cow t' begin with. Where's that

come from? Out th' Proprietors' money. Same way with land the Proprietors give 'em. All of it comes out th' Proprie money.

"Money, I tell you, is what's gettin' this country settled. E Proprietor is a man who's made money. He's made it in ma or trading or rum, one way or another—some of 'em farm And now they're puttin' that money into gettin' this country tled. They'll get it back again. They'll get it back and a litt' over. That is one reason they're puttin' it in. Another one is, don't know what else t' do with it Bein' a merchant ain't wh used to be—that's what they claim, anyhow. Too many la

Whit said, "I guess I d' know a gre' deal about laws."

"My father had money," Poole said, now that he thought it. "That was when we lived to Exeter. I knowed a good n of the Sandwich Proprietors back when I was a young man , was most of them boys. I been to Portsmouth many a t Knowed some of the merchants—not a great many, my fa knowed more of 'em. He was in a fair way to be a merchant h self until he lost his money. When my mother died, I went th' woods. I've lived alone always ever since then—most of time, anyhow. That's why I talk so much. I beg your pardon. look to me sleepy. I should have known better. I shouldn't h talked so much."

"No, I ain't sleepy—not to speak of, 't any rate."

"I seen Benning Wentworth a good many times. He's w I called him. But now you take John, him that's governor he ain't the same kind, and don't you forget it. He's Mark W worth's boy—even if he is Benning's nephew. Mark W worth's the richest man in New Hampshire Province. But didn't get it the way Benning got his; Mark made it mast There's a whole lot of difference. Young John is a gentlem and I don't say that he ain't, but he's got a head on him, an may be he's honest. He knows the woods, too. I don't mean a trapper, but at any rate he's been in 'em. Why, a feller come here last year who'd been loggin'—this's a good story, you wo mind if I tell it?"

o ahead, do. I'd like to hear it."

Well, there was quite a crew of 'em loggin' at this place e he'd been. The wages was good and the rum was found em, and they wan't payin' no heed to broad arrows nor n'. They'd take any tree that they had a mind to—and if the or anyone else didn't like it, he knew what he could do. ers are apt to be that way, you know. They bring down a big and it makes 'em feel pretty good. They see a thing that size there on the ground, and they get an idea that they can anyone. I never see many loggers that you'd got to spit in face to get 'em to fight ye.

Well, young John Wentworth he heard tell about what they up to, and he didn't like it. He didn't like either—or maybe id—that they'd as good as sent word that any King's officer ted t' come up there 'd get hove in t' river.

Young John, he went up there.

They'd heard he was comin', and they was all ready for him wo- or threescore of 'em, all down on the landin'. They'd fig- d, you see, that he'd bring a big party—which would be all more fun because there'd be that many more splashes. If he'd ig enough men, there might even be a fight in it—though st of 'em figured that was too much to hope for.

Well, young John, he showed up—and he didn't bring but y one man with him—a feller to paddle him. This feller laid canoe right alongside the landing, and John he clumb out— alone, mind you. And then he just stood there and looked 'em over. He was dressed just as fine as he would be t' Portsmouth a long velvet coat, 'n lace, 'n all that He would a been some- n' t' throw in the river! But nobody done nothin', and young hn he just stood there, quiet and easy, lookin' 'em over.

"Then he started in talkin'. He said who he was, and why he d come there. they'd been takin' down mast trees that didn't- long to 'em. Then he says to 'em, 'I will now read you the law' and he took a roll, like, of paper out'n his pocket, and he went work and he *read* 'em the law. He read every last word of d then he rolled up the paper and put it back in his po

"'You been breakin' the law,' he says. 'I come up ' you that you got to stop it.' Then he waited again....

"Now was the time to throw him int' th' river.

"Nobody moved; nobody said nothin'.

"John turned on his heel, and walked toward his canoe

"They give him a cheer, then—they couldn't help it."

Whit said, "Did they quit takin' mast trees?"

"I couldn't say as to that I ain't certain that either side fig that that was point."

"No, I d' know as 'twas "

Poole appeared to have spent his desire for talking "W guess we better turn in," he said. "You go'n t' lay by your That bed ain't a wide one Or you go'n t' lay by the fire?"

Whit said he guessed that he'd lie by the fire.

He didn't think long on the things Poole had talked ab Tomorrow night at this time they'd be in their own house

It was a lowery day—more than threatening, really, it w part in itself of the storm that was coming—as they set out next morning. Poole wanted them to wait over But Whit said he guessed they'd better keep going; they'd make it all ri

There was no question as to what Melissa wanted to do.

So they'd set out as early as politeness permitted.

The wind in the night had worked its way up from the so to east—and in two or three hours it would be fair and sq from the northeast. And there it would stay for as much s week maybe—this time of year. Looking up through the tr where the branches were bare, Whit could see on the face of solid gray sky, the wispy, lighter gray clouds moving steady a fast. There'd be no mountains to show Melissa today! He'd lucky to get her in under a roof before she got wetted—befo the cold had got into her, and her clothes heavy to carry.

He didn't like her to hurry, and he made her rest now then. "We got all day to do it in," he wished it was true.

"It's goin' t' rain pretty soon," she said.
"Not before nightfall." It had held off longer now than he had expected.
"Or snow," said Melissa.
"I shouldn't think so. It might."
"I hope it does," said Melissa. "I hope we get a great storm! We'll be in our own house." Just at this moment the miles between didn't exist for her. She was in her own house—and the storm running outside was a good thing to hear: it was keeping Whit home with her.
Whit understood. He saw it as brightly as she did. He saw her face bright by the light of the fire.
"We will be when we get there," he answered cheerfully—at least he meant to sound cheerful.
Melissa said nothing
He supposed she hadn't heard him—overhead it was noisy—the wind in the trees.
But she'd heard him, all right.

Whit was traveling first today, there being no well-worn track for Melissa to follow Before very long, now, they'd come to the river. Always before he had crossed where there were boulders—and if he didn't lose his balance nor slip, he got across dry. With Melissa along, he'd have to cross where it was sandy. He'd wade it and carry her That would be the best way.

Melissa trudged along steadily She had tucked up her skirts so that they didn't hamper her much, and while she wouldn't have wanted to have to make the same trip tomorrow, she felt pretty certain she could do it today Whit was easy to follow; he wasn't going too fast, and with his broad back in front of her, the approach of the storm overhead didn't seem to her threatening. About all she had to watch out for was not to trip over . . . thing. This was the day that all along they'd been try . . .
This was the day they'd be in their own house.
Her . . . about from one thing to . . .

as freely as though she'd been at her wheel. Her thou... stay for a little with something remembered—or with s... looked forward to, it didn't matter—and then be called what she was doing by a kink in the thread or a turn in the p...

It was the sound of the wind took her back to that da... when, in the roadway that ran past the tavern, she'd fel... wind blowing. In front of her then, poor Joe Felipe had... talking—trying to say something—but she'd sent him to... Joe Felipe. He had the same name whenever she saw him—you could never count on him to be the same man. She'd... sick in fear of him—Pennacook she remembered ... There... evil in Joe—but not all of the time. Oftentimes when... thought of him, she called him "poor Joe." That bright red... hair ribbon—

"Here's the river," Whit said. He was leaning his gu... against a big tree.

There was the river. It looked ugly and cold.

"I'll take this stuff over—half of it, anyhow: I d' want t' ge... of it wet in case I should fall in If you ain't got any objectio... I'm gon' t' take off my pants"

Melissa watched him step into that ice water and go slosh... steadily forward till he was well past midstream Then... stopped and considered—peering upstream and down Th... deep part was before him When he'd chosen his way, he stepp... carefully into it—the water up to his waist ... and he got sa... across. He didn't call out to her, and when he got back, al... said to her was "Water ain't so cold now as 'twill be in th... spring."

"Looks cold enough, though!' she answered with feeling. ... 'twas cold as it looks, it would be solid ice."

Whit had started to pick up the rest of his load He change... his mind. Straightening up, he said, "I guess maybe I'd... take you over now." Another trip through that water ... some of the limberness out of his legs.

"I ain't in no hurry!" Melissa assured him.

"You'll be all right." He picked her up in...

d have a child. "But when we get out there, don't wiggle 'n k."

Vhen did I ever wiggle or squawk!"

lever," said Whit, wading into the water. "But most women d."

Squawk'! Well, I should hope so!—if you was to come at without any pants on 'n try t' lug 'em into a river at this time ar! You might find one or two who would squawk a little naybe, before you had even stepped into the water."

Maybe. Hold still, now. I want one arm free to balance." He ed her over, holding her now in his right arm alone. "This like Squam Brook," he said reassuringly "If I was to step hole, you wouldn't no more 'n get wetted."

That's a nice thing to know," Melissa admitted

hut your eyes, if you want to"

e kept her eyes open, but when they came to the deep part, didn't breathe . . . his arm and his shoulder felt solid and ; whatever limit there was to his strength, she knew was way from them. Looking down at the water, she felt a scorn t. She gloated over it—and then on a sudden it came up very to her. She tightened all over—and shut her eyes tight—Easy, now—easy—"

he opened her eyes—and the water had fallen away.

Whit set her down on the bank "What was the matter? Did think I was goin' t' drop you down into it?"

No!" She shook her head happily "I knew you'd hold me up. n't so sure, though, you could keep the water down, too."

Sandy bottom," said Whit. "It ain't all of one hardness. Some es is softer 'n what you think they will be I'll go back now ring over the rest of it, and then we'll get along It ain't awful now." He stepped into the water with no more hesitation n if it had been, say, the end of July.

She shivered, watching him. It seemed a long time before back.

Whit drew on his breeches, and was tying his moc ne over here or days," he remarked, "'n lay

acrost—down below here where it's narrow. Then you c[...] over without any trouble."

"I d' know as I'll need it right away," said Melissa.

"Well, I d' know as you will."

He loaded up with his things, and they set off into the w[...] again.

They had not left the river more than ten minutes be[...] them when Whit heard overhead the first hiss of the snow[...] wind had slackened somewhat, and the small flakes were si[...] unhurriedly down through the trees.

"Here's your snow," he said to her over his shoulder.

"Right on time, ain't it? How far is it now?"

"You tired?"

"No."

"Well, I'll show you." He took note of the tree that wa[...] one he was heading for, and then stopped and knelt do[...] Brushing smooth with his hand a place on the ground, he d[...] a little map for her—the brooks and the hills—and explained [...] all carefully. "Well, that's how it is," he concluded. "You se[...] now, do you?"

"Yes."

"Well, we got plenty of time—" and rubbing out what he [...] done, he said, "You show it to me now."

She couldn't do it.

Whit laughed, and said easily, "I'll show you again."

This time she got it.

"Sometimes," he said, standing up, "if you know what you['re] doin', it don't seem like so much."

They had started along "That's true," said Melissa. "And y[...] know you woudn't have scairt me if you'd a come right out an[...] said that seein' now it was snowin' it wouldn't do no hurt, rea[...] for me to know where I was. Comin' thicker now, ain't it?"

"Bound to," said Whit. "Well, let 'er come. We won't get we[...] anyhow, with these little small flakes This is proper dry win[...] snow."

was getting harder to see, and he felt some annoyance be-
e he'd neglected to spot any trees along this part of the
e. The shadows had gone, and the land here was flat—and
y last pitch pine about as much like another as two peas in
d. A man could get turned around pretty quickly in here. In
woods, when it's snowing, you can tell which way the wind's
ing: through the bare, open branches the snow holds to its
t. But when you're in an interval covered with pitch pine,
wind is all broken up by the thick-growing needles and the
w falls every which way; you can't tell a thing.

Whit was beginning to get just a little uncomfortable. He was
ng up trees to keep going straight, but it was a poor enough
thod and he hadn't much faith in it.

Maybe, he thought, he should have stuck to the river. It would
e added six miles—the two sides of the angle they were now
ting off—but at least he'd have been certain of not getting
sted. He didn't really believe that he could get turned around
e—but he wasn't sure of himself. And he was getting excited.
If he'd been alone (he knew this was so) he'd have been
more than interested to see how close he would come to
ting the stream at the place that he wanted If he were to miss
ntirely—when he was alone—it would be a good joke on him
and serve him well for his clumsiness

But there'd be nothing to laugh at if he lost his way this time.
e was doing her part—and it was the most she could do—by
st keeping going. She was depending on him to lead her
aight to their house.

The snow was thicker and thicker—and smaller flakes, too. It
emed to be colder. He was constantly tempted to work to his
ght—because on that side he could afford to go wrong, if he
dn't turn clean around—but he tried as hard as he could not
give in to it too much. He couldn't see ahead very far now—
y three or four rods.

Strongest of all was the feeling that just ahead was the stre
He tried to think calmly how much time had gone by
hey'd left Bearcamp River. But he couldn't tell Still,

ding along. There'd come little short spells when she'd forget where she was—and then she'd step on a stone awakened again to the storm all around her and the the cold.

After a time, they were going uphill. They'd left the pines. Under the snow, there were dry leaves that slid about gave her no purchase. She was leaning way forward, trying up the hill, and every so often one foot would slip backwards she'd fall to her knees. Then she'd get up again, and follow after Whit. The strength that she'd had was spending fast Turning his head, Whit saw her stumble; he helped her up stood holding her arm. "You hurt?" he demanded.

"No."

"'Tain't awful far now. We're about roundin' th' hill. want t' go on? We're pretty near there."

She knew she'd got to go on

Whit stayed beside her, helping her forward.

She could tell when they began going down because could walk almost upright, or it felt like it, anyhow . . . W had one arm around her and, though he wasn't actually carry her, he bore most of her weight. She was making the motions walking, but if he had let go of her, she'd have slumped heap.

She wasn't doing much more than kind of waving her fee the ground

Whit would have slung his rifle and carried her outright would have been easier for him—but he could see better way, and there was less danger of falling.

They covered a mile in this fashion. He had to go arou everything because she couldn't pick up her feet.

In his mind he was seeing the dry wood on the hearth and fire he'd laid and left ready to kindle. He could see the pi splinters, the curled bark, and the tinder, everything ready, nee ing only a spark. He'd even taken the pains to cover the top the chimney so as to keep it all dry.

They were now in the spruces. Here was a sn

ith snow—where he'd taken a log to use in the house.
was another.

was light on his arm now. A little while back, his arm had
ching. She was light as a feather.

was searching the swirl of the snow that was in front of
s and the grayness beyond it for the shape of his house.
n he saw it: still and white, there it was. . . .

ning up to the doorway, he set down his gun, picked up
a, and carried her in.

e skin over the doorway fell back into place It was colder
e than it had been outside—cold and dark, too, that was
he'd expected. "We got here," he said.

lissa stirred in his arms. "Set me down. I c'n walk."

ou ain't got to. We're here."

e opened her eyes—"Whit, I can't see nothin'!"

ou will in a minute."

Where are we now?" Her voice didn't sound very big "Whit
We're in the house!"

hat's right," he said. He set her down by the hearth.

Then he'd brushed the snow from his clothes, he reached
ide for his gun—and blew the snow from the wrappings he
round the breech. Then he unwrapped it carefully, keeping
y, and stood it up by the fireplace He sprinkled in powder
nd the tinder and pine splinters—and he put a stout pinch
he pan of his gun. Now he was ready . . Holding the gun
and sideways with the breech close to the fire, he drew back
hammer and cocked it—and he let her go.

He got a good flash in the pan and a flare in the tinder—and
tinder caught from it.

With Melissa beside him, he knelt on his hearth, watching the
wth of the fire, the cold and darkness behind him.

The pine splinters had caught and were sputtering nicely.
e bark crackled and bubbled, it flamed and it sm . .
m it all—up into the chimney—there rose a th . .
oke. And the flame spread and increased . . .

A rolling billow of smoke seemed to come down the chi
and out into the room. "Chimbley's cold," muttered
Another came, and another—

He had forgotten to uncover the chimney.

He jumped to his feet and ducked out through the door
Melissa could hear him on the roof overhead—and some
spilled down the chimney. Then the chimney took hold
really started to draw.

As Whit came in again, the first thing that he noticed
that she'd thrown back her hood and had loosened her hair

Melissa slept warm that night; she had the fire on one side
her, and Whit on the other. She hadn't that steady assurance
warmth that had used to come from the chimney by her bed
in Kettleford. But she had enough of warmth, all the same
that whenever she wakened she was conscious of comfort
would shift then just a little, knowing things were all right,
have no feeling at all of wanting to hurry the night.

Whit kept up the fire. He didn't sleep very long at a time.

Well on in the night he went to the doorway and found it
stopped snowing. That didn't mean anything. But the next
he looked, there were a few stars in the west and the wind
to nothing. There was a brightness to the black of the night
stead of the dullness that had been there before. He went
and lay down, thinking about it. He concluded it was proba
just a break in the storm—not a change in the weather. Becau
almost always a northeasterly storm, once it gets started, is g
for two or three days. It isn't a thing that springs up like
shower; it takes time for its building, and it lasts a long time.
and on, it gets worse; and sometimes, for a little, it may see
to let up some. But you can count on it, it will never give
until it's blown itself out. Not till the wind has gone well to
westward can you figure it's done with. It would be snow
again in the morning, all right.

When he wakened the next time he could tell by the fire

een asleep this time for as much as three hours. It was still in the cabin—except near the fire—but outside, grayness ome—and it wasn't snowing. The whole sky had cleared and the wind he felt on his face was coming out of the The storm was over and done with: that much was certain. he sun would come up so you could see it and feel it. They n't have to hold to the cabin today. Melissa wouldn't. She come out and see where they were. And she would take a deal more kindly to this place that he'd chosen if it were to the sun on it when she first looked around. He had not to tell her what the mountain would look like.

tightened his belt, and went in to fix breakfast, letting the fall over the doorway but not taking the trouble to fasten down. Daytime had begun.

lissa lay sleeping. There was no change at all in the light in bin. He tucked the coverings round her and she didn't stir, knew she was warm enough He listened a moment for the d of her breathing . . . and it came even and gentle She was ortable, surely. And she had taken no hurt He held to the ght of her for a minute or two, and then he broke off with- urry and went to the fire.

would please him, he knew, if when she wakened there was hot and ready that he had fixed for her After a day or two, would come to share naturally the work and the house They ld divide up the work of their living, the things that fell to one being just and distinct. But for this first day or so, he'd enjoyment and pride in providing all things for her tend the fire, making her food ready for her to eat, and fixing n place to sleep for them both

he house and outside would be all of it strange to her. H prepared it against her coming to share it It was she wh ld quicken it. But he had prepared it.

le was molding some cakes with his hands, patting th mp between his palms—corn meal and grease and wa —and as soon as he'd shapen one, setting it close to

They didn't take long to cook. It didn't matter much, any once they were hot. They had just as much strength in them and uncooked. But they tasted good hot.

After she'd eaten, they would go out and look round. The would be up . . . and it would all be before her, everything ing and the sky bluer than summer. She would stand in fro the doorway and see the whole thing at once—just as he from the hilltop. He would tell her, of course, that the soil in the interval was deep and was good, and point out the di tion he would go to get hay. But she would see why he'd ch it.

Then they'd go round in back—and there'd be the mount

He heard her stir in her sleep; she was wakening now whole winter night and some part of yesterday, she had l there by the fire, sleeping and warm. He hoped her strength come back to her. Because if it hadn't he didn't know what w bring it.

She was awake now, but her face was turned from him, he waited to speak to her until she was ready. She was prob trying to figure out where she was. He usually did that him before he opened his eyes; there was less to confuse him. N until he could speak to her, he felt separate from her—but th voices would fix that. He waited, not moving, crouched by fire, hearing the silence. . . .

"Whit . . .?"

"Ayuh—right here."

"Mornin'," she said to him.

Whit grinned—she was all right. "Mornin'," he said to h

He went down to the brook to bring up some more wa There was a fox had been by in the night, but nothing else could see that had fur or meat on it. When he got back to cabin, she was standing up by the fire. He set down the w

She said, "I'd ought t' done that."

"Tomorrow," he told her. "You sleep pretty

"I never slep' better."

ou'd know you been travelin' yesterday, though."

f my legs, I would, yes."

t you didn't take any hurt? Not—well, you didn't take arm?"

o," she assured him, smiling a little, "not that I know of."

ou'd know if you did, I guess."

nd I would tell you."

ood." He knelt on the hearth to examine the cakes. "You t seem any too spry when we got here last night."

don't remember."

ell, you wan't, I c'n tell you. You was draggin' your feet Still, you kep' a-goin'."

elissa said nothing.

guess these here are done now. What'll you start on, a cake? a cake?"

don't want to eat now."

e'd been afraid of that. "You better eat somethin'—'n I s this' 'bout all there is "

will in a minute. I want to go out first 'n see where we be. dark in here, Whit. I seen the sun, though, when you went through the doorway. I seen it again when you come in here now. I want to go out 'n see what I'm goin' t' look at—every e I go to the door from now on for a while "

Whit stood up slowly. "All right," he said

t was only three steps to the doorway—and he drew back the s and Melissa stood forth. Whit followed after. They stood ether in front of their house.

Melissa's eyes blinked before the glistening glory of the sun the snow. But she could see what was before her—and she sn't shut in by it. She could see as far now as she had need to . She felt hope and some promise . . . and she was unaware her silence.

Whit said, "If you want to step round in the back, I c'n the mountain."

But she stood now in that spot toward which she'd

ing for a good many months. The mountain was extra. She had no need to go look at it.

Whit told her the things that he'd expected he would ...

And she said, "Yes," and nodded. But he knew she wasn't ... ing the things that he told of.

What she was seeing was the earth down there in the inter... brown in the springtime as it would be when he'd turned ... and the light green on the trees—and the little bugs in the ... and on the other side of the springtime, the summer awai... them. The mountain was Whit's.

But she would go round and look at it....

She picked her way carefully, choosing to go in Whit's ... prints in the deep, fluffy snow. When he stepped aside and s... still, she lifted her eyes to the mountain—and she saw it si... and clearly as it rose gray in the sunlight, gray where the ... were, with patches of white, and then the solid and awful ... rock of the top.

To herself, she said hurriedly, "This is his mountain"— then its greatness assailed her and in the rush of her feelings ... couldn't limit her thoughts. It was far away from her, it was ... off in the distance! ... and yet it came close. It was the biggest ... had that could do that to the distance—make the distance ... nothing right when she could see it was there. But the ... could do the same thing—and not because of its greatness ... when she looked at it too long without looking away.

Whit loved this mountain. And back in the days on the tr... Whit had gone forward happily toward the roar of the falls...

Whit loved this mountain But she didn't love it.

She looked at it steadfastly as in the sunlight it filled all ... could see.... The threat of it was real to her. She didn't have ... know what the threat was. She faced it squarely a moment—a... found it too big for her to feel anger or bitterness.

Then she turned away

Whit had stood hesitant, waiting to see. And now it came ... him that she understood. He thought that was the reason th... she didn't say anything. She had stood this first time in

ntain's full presence . . . and she had been lifted to wonder just as he had himself.

he put her hand through his arm, and he was glad of it.

s they came round the house, she felt the strength of his as he walked at her side. The sun was warm on her face ey stood by the door—and together looked down to where fields would be green. This was their place. This was gh for her. Let them make it to grow—here in this place in front of them—she and Whit and the child that would or them in the spring. That was all that she wanted. That all that she asked for.

was good that the door of the house opened south to the sun. e, it was in that direction that Kettleford lay, but that didn't ter: she wasn't troubled so often by Kettleford now. Nor ld Kettleford come here, because there was too much of dis- e that lay in between—oh, yes, too many days, and a great l of distance. Joe couldn't come here, she didn't mind Joe— was far away now.

They went into the house where the fire was working . . . and was a little surprised when she found that she wanted to eat.

4

MELISSA WAS the one who kept count of the days She d reason to The days remained fixed and she made her way rough them. She added the days into weeks and knew how any she'd done with . . . and she knew how many weeks lay head between her and her time

Whit, on the other hand, watched the winter go by He told ff its progress by the sun creeping north, by the strengthening old in the night yet the sun warmer at noontime, by the frost in he trees that made the maples like iron to threaten his ax; and e watched the wax of the moon and its waning The deer h arded but had begun to be poorly. There was not a i

And on a night when the wind came from the

mountain, the wolves would make as much racket as the poorwills in the summer. These were the nights when the were the thickest, and when the noise of the ice on the pond the loudest. At the full of the moon, the moon looked smaller when it got up into the sky than it did in the au But it gave out a great light! Three nights in a row he had it so bright that a man could pluck a hair from his head and it up in the moonlight and see it. And right in front of the where the snow was tracked down, a step made a sound like squawk of an axle.

He said to Melissa one night, "What do you figure we' now?—the third week in the month? I ain't reckoned it late

"We lack a day of it. Tomorrow is Sunday."

"Yes, that's about right. From the feel of the air, there thaw comin' soon. And after that snow. Been too cold to lately."

"There ain't no place without it that I can see from the yard."

"Next month it'll snow. That's the time when we get it. ruary's the snow month—February and March."

She spread her hands to the fire.

"You ain't cold," he asked, "are you?"

"No, I ain't cold. But the fire feels good."

"Yes."

"March is close on to springtime," Melissa suggested.

"Well, it's part of the winter."

"But there'll be signs of spring then, when we get in March."

"Oh, yes, there'll be signs of it—same as you can see signs the autumn in August And then all through the autumn you feel winter come on. But spring, now, is different. There signs of spring thick all around you. But it won't make no ference: it'll still be the winter. But when it *is* spring, I tell you, you'll know it!"

He'd been whittling a spoon, and now he rested his hands

ing his work up to the light of the fire to see how it was ing. "That ain't a bad spoon," he said, "or 'twon't be when finished."

elissa said something—but she didn't know what it was.

here came a morning when it was sunny and warm; there steam from the roof and the sound of snow melting every-re—from the drip at the eaves to the rush of the brook. Me- fastened the skins up away from the doorway; it was mer outside than it was in the house.

Whit was chopping this morning down below in the interval. en he came up for his dinner an hour or so before noon he carrying his leather shirt flung over his shoulder and his n shirt was darkened with sweat from his neck to his belt. he said to her husband, "You'd best take that shirt off and me rense it out. The other one's dry for you."

Whit nodded, and did as she told him—drying himself by the and then he put on the dry shirt. "That feels pretty good," he . "You ain't got to wash that one. I'll just wring it out and ng it up here."

They last a lot longer," she said, and she took the wet shirt tside to a bucket of snow water that she'd caught from the of.

Whit was easing his back in front of the fire, and resting his es in the gloom of the cabin He had put in a good morning. a minute or two he'd be past this first weariness, and ready eat. He could eat now if he had to, but his mouth was still dry nd his stomach still tightened from four hours' working. He rew the stool with his foot from the hearth corner to more in ront of the fire, and sat down with his back to the heat, and his ead in his hands. He still had in front of his eyes the fresh de-ail of the cut he'd been making in the last tree that he'd felled. He'd been felling all morning, there being no wind: two pretty air hemlocks and a white oak tree of some bigness. It ak that had taken the time. He had been tempted to

and just let it stay there. But now that he had it down, he
glad that he'd tackled it.

He seemed to feel for some reason as though he were sleep
as though he'd like to lie down. . . .

Melissa had called him—"Whit! Whit, come out here
and he scrambled out through the doorway and stood half b
in the sunlight without any idea of what could have happ

"Sh, shsh!" she said. "Hush—"

Whit held his breath. He couldn't imagine what it could
been that she'd heard—but he didn't ask.

"A man hollered. I heard him—"

Whit didn't believe it. It had happened to him when he
alone in the woods. Oftentimes he had never found out wh
was. He said nothing and listened. . . .

"Hello!"—they heard it together.

For an instant, Whit stood perfectly still. Then he turn
Melissa. "That's Jonas," he said. But he could see she wasn't
.. the start it had given her. "He said *he'd be over*"—
nit raised his head toward the woods and called back.

"I guess I'd better go meet him," he said to Melissa. "He's
about the same track that we come in on"—and he set off a
heavy lope down through the snow

Melissa was trembling She didn't know why. Now that s
knew it was Jonas she ought to be glad. It was what she h
wished for a good many times—and stronger than "wished for
But now that someone was here—or would be in a minute—
was startled and frightened. She wished Whit hadn't left her
and she almost called after him. She watched him go plunging
off into the woods. And then very suddenly, as Whit disap
peared, joy seemed to spring up in her, and she hurried into the
house. They were going to have company! She would hear
people talking. There would be talking and laughing, and nea
from outside. She knew Jonas's voice as it had been in his ow
house, and it would be the same here in the cabin, and he would
look the same, too. *What must she do now to get everythin
ready? What would Whit want for him?*

she and Whit would be proud of? He would want to eat, y. That was the first thing. Oh, she was happy!

the pot on the fire she had enough stew ready to feed both men. But now they had company she couldn't be saving and added some lumps of fat to it and put in some more salt. e were four dumplings in it—and she knew Whit could three—but she had no Indian fine enough to make any more. if she herself did the ladling from the pot into the bowls, mightn't notice that she didn't take any herself.

Not even the freshness of Jonas's coming could make either talk when they sat down to eat. They sat on stools on either of the fire, and Melissa, her back to them, filled the bowls n the pot—she gave Whit's bowl to Jonas and her own bowl Whit. With a nod to each other, the two men fell to eating. lissa had moved from the fire; she stood by and watched. She a spoon for each man, but Jonas didn't use his—nor did he with his fingers as a good many men would. He used his own fe as long as there was anything solid to spear with it, and en he raised the bowl to his lips He wiped his beard and his ustache on the back of his hand and said that that was the st stew that he'd ever eat; he spoke to Whit. "Your woman," said, "is a pretty good feeder."

Whit was both pleased and proud He said, "She does pretty od. So does yourn, for that matter, if I recollect."

Melissa asked Jonas if he wouldn't have more.

But Jonas before they had started had looked into the pot; he id he couldn't eat any more if she was to pay him

Whit, when he'd finished, stretched out on the floor, and Messa ate her dinner while Jonas reported

Jonas said there wasn't a great deal to tell, not much bad happened in the month—or more it was, now, he guessed—since Whit and Melissa had left. There hadn't been any sickness to speak of. He'd helped Dan'l Beede to butcher a pig. He'd had the toothache himself, but he was over it now: she'd hauled it for him. It had cost him something for brandy, but he'd h

do it because rum wouldn't take hold on him enough to hav tooth hauled. He asked Melissa if she'd ever hauled any Whit, and she said no—rather proudly—not any yet.

There was a little pause there, and Jonas said, well, he nine left himself—he thought that was better than most m And they agreed that it was.

Whit said, "You ain't heard of nobody comin' in here settle?"

"Not right away, no, Whit. Of course, there's some talk of They say down t' Gilmanton—or so I hear, anyhow—that the a good many have got it in mind."

"This a good time for oxen 'fore the snow is too deep"

"Yes, you c'n get a team through the woods now in pre good shape."

"I didn't know but you might heard of someone."

"No," said Jonas, "I hain't. Mark Jewell t' Sandwich, I kno he's thinkin' of it. I shouldn't wonder but sometime *he* migh He's a good man."

"The young one, you mean."

"Yes. Him 'n his brother's both of 'em all right. You could ask for anyone better."

"Mark Jewell ain't married," Melissa put in.

"His brother ain't either. Still, they c'n fix that, time they g round to it."

"I'm all right now," Whit explained practically, "felling an limbing, I c'n do all right alone. You take later on, thoug when I'm ready to burn, I could use someone to help me— then I could help him. It'll be another year, anyhow, 'fore I get team."

"You take any fur so far?" Jonas inquired.

"No, not to speak of. For the traps I got out, I ain't done to bad. I got a fisher that's an awful nice pelt. I'd like you to see it it's up there on the rafter. But I don't get the time that I'd like t trap. Two days a week 's 'bout the most I c'n do".

"You stick to your clearin'," Jonas advi...

any fun in it like there is into trappin', an...

knit that. But it's quick *goin'* 'n comin'. 'Twon't be very long fore this country's trapped out—same 's 'tis now on beaver—'n then what have you got? If I'd started at your age to work with an ax instead of a gun, I'd be better off."

"I ain't spared the ax any," Whit defended himself. "Two days out of seven is all I've run my line. Wood takes up another, and one day to hunt in. Two days of clearin', and figure one for the weather. That's about how it goes—wouldn't you say, Melissa?"

"Yes—that's about it."

Her voice somehow made Jonas a little uneasy. She didn't seem to have so much spirit as he thought of her having. And yet he was certain that Whit hadn't noticed it. Probably seeing her right along every day, it just hadn't struck Whit.

Jonas turned to her. "And what you been doin'? Settin' here by the fire thinkin' on Kettleford? Not if I know you!"

"She does more work 'n I do." Whit answered for her. "She's chinked the whole cabin so's there ain't one drop of water or a whisper of wind can get through the walls anywhere She cooks for me better 'n I ever eat in my life, and she scrapes a skin clean enough so a fly wouldn't light on it. Three pair o' moggas'ns—one I ain't wore yet—and an awful nice shirt, I think that's pretty good—with winter, you might say, not more 'n half done yet."

"I don't believe that my woman has done any better," Jonas admitted "—not a gre' deal."

Still Melissa said nothing.

"Anybody been by here?" Jonas inquired.

"No," Whit answered cheerfully, "we ain't seen a soul."

Jonas was mystified. He'd never seen her so quiet And yet she didn't look poorly—except around her eyes maybe the way women did when they were in the family way Well, he'd let it go until later. But he knew he couldn't go home and tell Ida about it unless he could tell her the cause of it, too Ida would then tell him that that wasn't it, and also explain to him what it was. But if he brought no explanation for her to

of, she'd fret from now until April wondering what had go
wrong.

Jonas and Whit had a good afternoon. They went out on
pond and built up a fire, chopped a hole in the ice, and wai
for pickerel. Whit went off pretty soon to look at two traps a
a snare he had set on the other side of the pond. But he fou
them all empty. When he came back, Jonas had a great picke
stretched out on the ice that was as big as the leg of a calf "An
he got a jaw on him!" Jonas said proudly. "The size of a sho
—or pretty near, anyhow."

They got three more in two hours of fishing, though none
big as the first one. While they were fishing they would speak
and on of what a fine feed they would have to their supper.

On the way home, Jonas remarked, "Your woman mind
there not bein' no one to talk to?—no neighbor woman, I mea
you might say?"

"No, I don't think it. She hadn't ought to I ain't been fro
me a whole night since we come."

"You're lucky she don't"

"Why? What made you think of it?"

"Nothin'. I only wondered."

"She ain't complained any."

"My woman would. Why, even with that girl to talk to th
Beede brought with him—Mary Wells, the one works for him—
she wan't content. I says, 'Ida, what ails you? You got one fema
to talk to.' 'I know it,' she says, 'but we need another to ta
about.'"

Whit couldn't see what was funny about it.

Jonas concluded, on the path home the next morning, th
he'd been mistaken—that the girl was all right. This was the fir
chance that he'd had to think on it—Whit had come with him
as far as the town line—and as Jonas recollected last evening an
how she had sung for them, how she had enjoyed everythin
that he'd said, how she'd joined him in laughing, and how she'
even urged him to dance a jig for her—which he had done, an

badly, at that—and how she'd been the one who had wanted three of them to sit through the night and not go to bed, was concluded that she *must* be all right!—*he'd* had a good time, he was certain of that.

He told Ida Moore that he'd found them both well, of the mackerel he'd taken, and that Whit was coming on with his trapping. He said Whit had taken a fisher and the pelt was a fine one. He said that last night they all three had been merry in spite of his being as dry as he'd ever been in his life!—and that he had danced for them.

His wife said, "I'm sorry I missed it. Listen to me, Jonas: you don't think there's any need that I should go in there to see her?"

"No!" Jonas said heartily. "They're doin' all right."

15

FOR TWO or three days after Jonas had been there, Whit was repeatedly troubled by what Jonas had said . . . "Your woman mind it, there bein' no one t' talk to?" . . and he'd come round to thinking that maybe she might.

He finally decided that he'd ask her about it

After eating his breakfast in absolute silence because he was trying to think what to say, he stood in the doorway, his ax in his hand, with no excuse left for not going off to his work Then he spoke without hearing the words in his head. "Jonas asked me if you ever get lonely. I told him I didn't think it. Do you?" he asked.

She didn't answer him instantly, and he turned to look at her. She was kneeling down, busy in front of the fire

"No," she said strongly.

He shouldered his ax, said, "I didn't think so," and set off for the day's work that lay right ahead. As his mind turned to his chopping, he found he'd forgotten his whetstone, and he started back to the house for it—he knew right where it was . when he came in the door, Melissa was weeping

She told him two or three times she didn't know

matter. And when Whit said that she must know, or wouldn't be crying—all she could do was to say "Go away!"

Uncertain and troubled, after a minute, he went.

He'd forgotten his whetstone again, and had to work all morning with a very dull ax.

He supposed that when he went up for his dinner, they wo start in again just where they'd left off.

But not a bit of it. She was as sunny and chipper as he'd e seen her.

Whit was more troubled than he'd been before.

He made up his mind in the night, and next morning told her he was going to Sandwich He said he'd be back in evening, and would she be all right?

Melissa said, surely—for him to stay the night if he wante

Whit hadn't dreamed of staying the night. He said no, he be back.

He made a pack of his fur, including the fisher, and he was on his way when it began to get light. After that, he we . He could travel on snowshoes, and he found the snow goo He was at Beede's in just under three hours. His shirt was w through, but his wind was still good.

Beede was home, which was lucky, and he and Whit trade It took them two hours. But Beede was fair, and in spite o things being higher in Sandwich than they would have bee down the river in Kettleford, Whit did about as well here as h would have done there. Captain Butler would probably hav been a little more liberal when it came to something to boot, bu that was more than made up for by Beede's not cheating. An Beede, of course, saved the cost of the rum that he generally ha to pour into a trapper. Taking it all in all, both the men—Whi and Beede—were pretty well pleased; they felt they'd done wel.

Whit left his stuff there at Beede's and went down to the Moores'.

Jonas was off somewhere—as Whit had figure ' he might be —but he didn't mind that: he'd come to see

Whit sat down at the table and answered her questions while got him a dish of boiled cabbage and pork. Yes, Melissa was . Yes, she liked the house all right. Yes, they'd had a pretty d journey the day they went in. She'd got a little mite tired she'd taken no harm from it—she was really more rugged n what you might think. No, he wasn't away a great deal of time.

She set his dinner before him.

"Whit, what about water? Does she have far to lug it?"

"Only up from the brook."

"You got a yoke, have you?"

"Yes It ain't far."

"Why don't you see if she wouldn't let you lug it?"

"I hadn't thought of it. Yes, I could do that."

"Most women do it and never come to no harm by it. Still, is is her first and—well, I don't know, Whit—she ain't an ful big woman."

"I bring in the wood."

"Oh, I ain't blamin' you! And maybe I'm foolish—still, it ouldn't do her no good to fall down—not with two buckets on er and you off in the woods."

"I'll lug the water. You can depend on it."

He hadn't tasted his dinner. But Mrs Moore didn't urge him. he could see that whatever he had on his mind, he was getting eady to say.

"What I can't figure out," Whit confessed suddenly, "is—well, he ain't awful steady, if you know what I mean Would you know what that comes from? I come here to ask you"

"How do you mean she ain't steady? You mean on her feet?"

"No, I don't mean that way I mean she ain't steady Like—" He looked up at her. "Maybe I oughtn't to tell you of this But I thought you might know of some way I could help her. I tried to ask her, but she don't want to let on."

"All right. What is it?"

"Well—" It was difficult for him, but he went ahead. " I say she ain't steady, I mean—well, you take like]-

come on her crying, and she sent me away. A little while late come back up to dinner, and she was as cheerful as—well, was *more* cheerful than what I generally be."

"I shouldn't wonder," Mrs. Moore said. "What had set off cryin'?"

"Not a thing *I* could see. All that had happened was I'd to wondrin' if she could be lonely, 'n so I had asked, an said no. So then I went off to my choppin', and when I come ba for my whetstone—well, there she was at it."

"Ayuh. Well—?"

"I didn't like that. But I couldn't do nothin': she sent me aw When I come up for my dinner, like I say, she was merry. S was almost too merry, if you know what I mean. And that w worse than before. I got uneasy."

"You don't mean that you figured someone had put a sp onto her?"

"No, it ain't *like* that. And that wouldn't be likely—she's g strong a head."

"Well, what *did* you figure?"

"Well, it seemed more to me like she wan't *right* in her hea

Mrs. Moore had restrained herself as long as she could.

"Sart'n she ain't!" she said. "They never are." She stood wit her hands on her hips and her feet wide on the hearthston "And *sart'n* she's lonely! You'd ought to *know* that!" And sh added, half muttering, "You eat your dinner, while I think wha to do."

Whit couldn't eat. . . .

Mrs. Moore thought in silence. "I ain't goin' t' go in there," she said when she'd decided. "I ain't goin' in because it's up to you two. You c'n swing it all right, I think—though I'm for her. But you bear in mind now, and don't you forget it: she *ain't* right in her head, and she's lonely, to boot. It would be against nature if it wasn't so. Oh, I don't mean that she's crazy All I mean is, she's different—from what she's been before, and from what she'll be again. You treat her according You under stand, do you? As for the loneliness, she'll get over that, too—

everything goes well. Her time is in May. The last couple of months, she'd ought to feel better than what she does now. Right now is the worst. I'm comin' in there the first day of May."

Whit had supposed that he would decide that—but that was no matter.

"Now get on with your dinner—you ain't et a bite. I'm goin' to fix some things for you t' take in to her. You're goin' t' take them whether you like it or not."

Whit tackled the dinner. Along toward the end of it, it began to taste good. He was reminded that it was a long time, come to think of it, since he'd had any green stuff. It tasted real good.

Mrs. Moore had the bundle tied up when he'd finished. It looked as awkward to carry as he'd expected it would. He hadn't an idea what she could have put in it, and he regarded it glumly. When it bursted apart and fell into the snow, he'd know what it was anyhow.

Mrs. Moore told him that he had a long journey, and he agreed with her. He hoisted the bundle gingerly up to his shoulder, solemnly thanked her, and bade her good-by

He was gone out the doorway, when she called after him: "Whit—"

"Ma'am?" he said, turning . . .

"If once or twice in a week you could think of something to smile at, I don't suppose it would do any harm."

Whit said he would try.

He tied up her bundle more securely at Beede's Beede stood watching. "That is one trouble," Beede said, "with white women."

The heaviest thing that he'd got from Beede was thirty pounds of ground meal. But that would carry all right—it w a fifty-pound linen sack, and he put half the meal in e. and hung the sack round his neck. Outside the door, on his snowshoes. Beede settled the pack for him, bundle on top with two cords leading forward that

in his hand. Whit thanked him and said, well, he ready.

"It's a good thing," Beede remarked, "that you ain't far to

"No, it ain't awful far, and the footing is good."

"You got a hundredweight on you, I should think, easy. far do you figure it is to your place?"

"Not above fourteen mile."

"Well, good luck to you, anyhow—wait now, hold still. an idea."

Whit turned his head carefully. "Well, I hope it don't much."

Beede ignored this. "You ain't got a dog in there, ha —I mean in to your place."

"No," Whit agreed. "I ain't used a dog lately. I used to one, though, when I was a boy."

"Listen," said Beede, "I got a bitch puppy. She's weaned she's rugged, and she'll make a good dog. Her mother's and the dog that stood up to her used to be the best there was anywhere round. Nor this puppy I speak of be last of the litter. You wait'll you see her—" He disappea round the house.

Whit stood there helpless. It was an hour past noontime. had a hundred pounds on him or better than that, and fourte miles to go yet. Beede would claim that the fool dog wo follow—and Whit supposed the dog might, once they were of the house. Well, that didn't matter: he had nothing left he could trade for a dog

He heard Beede coming . . . and in the crook of his arm, Bee had a fat puppy—say, fourteen inches long. The puppy wriggling and jumping.

"This," said Beede, "'s a present."

"That's kind of you, surely. And I wish I could take her. I don't think she could travel real good in this snow."

"She don't weigh nothin'.—*Here, you, hold still! now!*—Yo could train her next autumn," Beede went on, "and she'd be before spring. She's got all kinds of blood in her. She's got blood

nd and setter and some collie dog, too. It's the collie dog d that'll give her her brains. They're awful knowin', collie s are."

Whit said, "Yes, so they be."

I would expect that she'd be a still-hunter, but you can't tell ourse until you've had her out. If she has got a voice, it ought e a real nice one. She's got enough hound in her to make sure hat."

You surely oughtn't to give her away, sir. And the way I'm d now I ain't got nothin' to trade."

You ain't got to trade. And what I give away, I'll more than back. When you get ready to breed her, you bring her to me. put my dog to her, and take two of the pups. You can have r choice, and then I'll take the next two. You couldn't ask for thing fairer than that."

But I ain't got no way to carry her! You can see that! The y I'm loaded now—why, even my pockets—the only place I ld put her would be in the seat of my breeches!"

Beede was holding his finger for the puppy to chew. "A ppy'd be company, I should think, for your woman."

"Give her to me," said Whit. "I'll put her inside of my shirt."

It had been dark for an hour when Whit hailed the house ong about sunset he'd called Beede some things that he'd ver heard any man call another before. But for the last couple hours, he'd been too tired to think. Three times he had fallen, d the fact that the weight of the meal sack had buried his head the snow had been the least of his woes. He had strained both s wrists trying to keep from squashing the puppy. It had been uite a trick, too, to get started again. But he still had the puppy side of his shirt, and he was certain, moreover, that it wasn't ead.

Melissa answered his hail—so he knew she was all right— nd then the light from the fire came out through the door.

He plodded on slowly to the door of his house, and one of them spoke until he was there. He eased the w-

back against the wall of the house, and his breathing w for him . . .

"You ain't hurt, are you, Whit?"

"No, I'm all right . . . I'm just kind of winded. I pretty good load."

"You surely did."

He reached in his shirt. "Dan'l Beede, God bless his soul, you a present," he said.

But by the time he'd eaten his supper, he had to admit it all had been worth it. He'd never seen anyone so migh pleased.

16

FOR FOUR or five weeks, nothing very much happen The snow was up to the roof round back of the house, and front where the sun got a crack at it, it came pretty well the side of the house. The furthest Melissa could go from was down to the brook in the path Whit had trodden wh he was going for water. Whit had made her some snowshoe not very good ones—but when once she had fallen in de snow with them on, and he'd pulled her upright, both she a Whit were content to let them hang the rest of the winter on peg on the wall. "If anything should happen to you," she sured Whit, "I could get out to Poole's on them. I should thi that I could." And they tried to believe this. Although Whit sa to himself that he guessed that a better plan was to try not to l anything happen to him. He never had seen anyone less gift on snowshoes; he couldn't quite understand it. Melissa hadn't y been down to the pond, she didn't know what it looked like.

The dog was the one that had the worst trouble in snow— new-fallen, light snow, she'd go clean out of sight. She wa funny to watch. Whit had suggested that they name her "Jen nifer" after Miss Jennifer Gowan. "Because I always liked he And I wouldn't say that she'd ever had anything called for her would you?—nor is likely to, now. At least not any humans." S

called the dog "Jen"—and, using it often, Jen became the name, and pretty soon they forgot why they'd called the dog They just called her Jen now because that was her name. e was no one to ask them why they called the dog that.

elissa was less and less lonely, though. Of course, she missed od many things even when she was busy that she'd always used to before they came here. She missed having things to with, for one thing. She had had eight different knives in citchen at Kettleford; here she had only one. And she missed g able to choose what she would eat. The only choice she had , a good part of the time, was whether to eat or not eat: if ate, she ate meat.

Whit kept them in meat without any trouble, and now and n he'd bring in a mess of fish from the pond. They were t of fat meat, though—Whit hankered for it—and she still n't laid by enough fat to make soap. But they got along. And had no sickness at all. Whit cut himself in the foot with his but it was clean as a whistle, and was well in a week. He used e different charms on it—two that he told her, and one that had to keep to himself. There was no way of telling, of course, ich charm took a hold, but one of them must have, from the y the cut healed.

It was in the first week in March, and the winter unbroken, en going down to the brook after water, he came on the ck of a moose. It had crossed the path without pausing— thin a couple of rods of the house—and gone on easy and mfortably into the woods. It was heading northeasterly. The ack didn't look to be two hours old.

Whit started to run up to the house after his gun—and then discovered that he still had the yoke on and the two empty ackets. So he went down to the brook again after the water, at when he got back to the house, he had spilled a good deal. "He may be right handy," he said to Melissa. "I hope he is. I vant to kill him right close to the house, so I won't have to im too far. There's a power of meat in him! If he's too efore I a shot, I'm goin' t' try drivin' him back

house. It may take me some time. I may have to lay out. But be back here tomorrow night, moose or no moose. Now, let see—have I got everything with me?"

"Just that one little blanket?"

"Yes. Now don't talk to me—"

She held his gun for him while he tied on his snowshoes, watched him go swinging off into the woods. She knew there not in his mind any thought whatsoever for what was be him—only what lay ahead.

She came back into the house. It must have been about se o'clock in the morning.

Late in the evening, when Whit hadn't come back, she down for the night and was determined to sleep.

All through the evening, she'd been listening for him—a thinking how he would look as he came in through the do ow she was certain that he was far away somewhere. He w her off, probably, than it was to Poole's. But she couldn't sl as she lay by the fire . . . and she couldn't get th thought of that open doorway out of her head. Anything cou come in it. It had only skins over it. Anything could push the aside—and step into the house. It didn't have to be Whit tha would come in the door.

After an hour of listening to silence, she suddenly got up an put wood on the fire. Then she took up a waistcoat that she ha been working on, and tried to sew on it. But her fingers wer cold and she didn't do well.

She went to the door and looked out. There was no moon to be seen—it was a solid, black night—and she had no way of telling how much of it had gone.

She came back to the fire, and built it up bright. The dog was watching her hopefully for something to eat, and Melissa pulled off a shred from the nearest piece of meat overhead—and the dog swallowed it whole.

Then she took a deep breath, and went back to bed. There was nothing else to do.

he got through the night all right—and when she saw by the
rway a little light coming through, she went really to sleep.
Two hours later she stood in the doorway—and stepped from
doorway out into the yard. The sun was up now, and every-
ng that she saw was notably looking just the same as it had
last time she had looked at it. Nothing had happened—
hing at all.

There was now no night between her and Whit's coming
ne.

The day had gone and dusk thickened when she was sure that
heard him—and in a minute or two he came out of the
ods. He seemed a strange shape and he came on toward her
wly . . . he was laden with meat.

Melissa stood watching him.

Whit set the meat down. He was happy and tired—and he
s covered with blood. His face and his hands, all over his
thing—his shoulders were slippery in a thick slime of blood.
s hair was stuck in it.

He said, "I got him"—and she saw the dog busily licking the
ood on his feet.

"I guess you did, all right. There ain't none of that *your*
lood?"

"No, not that I know of. All I put in was sweat. You hear
he shot, did you?"

"No, I ain't heard nothin', not since you left. And once or
wice I have listened. When was it, Whit?"

"Just about noon. Right up here by the swamp at the head of
he pond. I lay last night on the north side th' mountain—clear
way round in back, it must be fifteen miles. That is, as the crow
flies, but I covered forty to get there—not a yard under thirty,
I'm satt'n of that. Them fellers can travel, now I want to tell
you!" He got down on one knee to loosen his snowshoes. "I tried
for a shot soon after I left here. But I didn't get it: he was too
wise. Look here, I can show you—" Still with one snowshoe
he commenced to draw a plan in the snow.

"You'd better come in, Whit. Do you want t' leave that m there?"

"No, you can take it. Look, here's how it was—"

"I'm lookin'."

"Bend down here closer more, so you c'n see. A man do get a moose every day, does he?"

"No," she agreed with him, "I guess he don't."

Whit sketched it all out for her there in the snow. He us a piece of bark for the moose and a twig for himself, and it w all as clear there before him in that square yard of snow as it h been when it was happening. Sometimes it was clearer, becau he knew all the time now just where the moose was.

Twice Melissa asked questions, but that was toward the b ginning—from then on she kept quiet except for "Ayuh, I se

Finally, the bark came very close to the twig . . .

"I didn't think that he'd ever turn around. But he did, and ed. I tried for his heart. And I thought surely I'd missed it ow he did run! He ran to about here"—he shifted the bar And then as it lay there, he brought up the twig and placed it o top. "I cut his throat," he said "You should a seen the bloo come!"

After a moment, he said, his voice uncertain and strang "That was all there was to it."

And then he stood up very suddenly without looking at her "I guess I'd better wash," he said.

17 THE MORNING that Melissa announced that this was now April, Whit said, well, if that was the case, he'd got to make a trip out. He wanted to get his fur out to Beede before too many trappers should have taken the edge off of Beede's desire to trade. There were a score of things—easily—that he wanted to trade for—and two score for Melissa. They had talked them over so often that he had them clearly in mind—and if his fur would bring half of them, he'd be doing well. He figured his pack

ghed about sixty pounds, but there was a lot of musquash o it that wouldn't bring very much.

He had fashioned a toboggan to bring his stuff back, and he out the next morning—carrying the pack on his back and ling the empty toboggan. There was three foot of snow in woods most of the way, but it was beginning to go, and on south side of the ridges, there were a good many bare places. e brooks were big with snow water, but not yet over their nks, and although the maples showed red, there wasn't yet y green. It seemed to be that way with everything: for every n of spring coming, there was still plenty of winter. The bears ould have been out, but he didn't see any sign, and he wondered if Jonas had. He would be glad to see Jonas. He would be ad to see Beede. And he would feel happy when he was on his ay home tonight hauling a good load of things.

When he got to Beede's, he found they had sickness. One of eir people—a man named Peter Brett—was out in the yard uttering round in a kind of halfhearted fashion that was neither orking nor idleness. He told Whit that Beede himself had had o take to his bed. "The fever's got hold of him, same as it had old of me. I was took down with it the day before yesterday. ad it bad, but I knowed what to do You can't tell him nothin rop your pack 'n set down."

"You wouldn't say that he felt up to tradin'?"

"Tradin'? Hell, no! I tell you the fever's got hold of him. H won't do no tradin'—not for maybe a week I could have hi on his feet by noontime tomorrow, if he'd listen to me, though

Whit said he guessed he'd go down to the Moores'.

"They ain't to home—neither one of 'em ain't"

"No?"

"They went down t' Gilmanton. Somebody died. Some kin bers, it was. I don't know who. I ain't acquainted round the Exeter's my home. You got any beaver?"

"No, not to speak of. Have they had the sickness?"

"Who? Jonas Moore? No, he wintered good—both him her did. Your woman well? I heard she was expectin'."

"Appears to be, yes. Well, I guess I'll go home."

"You might as well. You can't do nothin' here."

Whit hung his pack up in Beede's big woodshed. It was s from hedgehogs and rats, but you couldn't tell about fire. He stowed the toboggan where it would be out of the way. He about to leave, then, when Nate Beede came up—he was oldest one of the boys, he was about seventeen. Nate promp took charge of things—and Brett shrugged his shoulders drifted away.

Nate shifted the pack to a slightly different location, urged Whit to come in and eat dinner—or to have some rum the least.

But Whit said he'd already eaten, and he guessed he'd bett go back.

Nate offered to advance him anything that he needed, b nit said, no, he'd be back in the course of a week. At you ede's insistence, he did take a peck of potatoes. He kne 'issa would welcome them. She'd have been disappointed ..e'd come home empty-handed, she'd been looking forward so many things.

Before he got home, it seemed like a long trip. It like a long winter. He was more tired before he reached hom than he would have been if he'd been dragging a load.

He went back in a week, and he found Beede better. They and then traded. It went pretty well. Whit got close to three quarters of the things that he'd planned on. Then Beede ha some French powder and he got some of that, and he got an spade with a good iron strap to it. And he almost got a beetl but Beede wanted too much. A good many things that Melis had figured on, Beede didn't have there. But he sent her tw needles and a half pound of tea, and Whit bought her a hand kerchief to put over her head that was about a yard square an as brave as could be. It had colors worked in it.

He saw the Moores, too, and Mrs. Moore said again that sh

ald be in there the first day of May. And she sent Melissa a bage.

By the time he had all his purchases fixed on the toboggan, it le to more of a load than he'd thought it would be. But he n't take anything off—and once he got the thing going, it along pretty well. Where the going was level, it gave him trouble. But when he tried to slant up a hill, it wouldn't track it him, but would fall away to the side. Coming downhill e, he knelt on the back of it and he got a great ride—whoop-and shouting, it made him feel pretty good.

It was well on to midnight by the time he got to the house. Melissa put on the handkerchief, and boiled them some tea, they had a feed, and were merry.

... and then even though it was late and Whit was dog-tired, 'd got to see every single thing he'd brought back.

Whit showed them all to her, one thing at a time. And then ate some more, and they went to bed.

Outside it was raining.

—they both heard the thunder.

Whit said: "That ends the winter. 'Twon't be a great while re we'd ought t' get spring"—and then he went to sleep.

But Melissa was wakeful.

18

TRUE TO her word, Ida Moore put in her appearance the late afternoon of the first day of May. She had Jonas with er. According to the reckoning Melissa had kept, this was only he last day of April. But none of them argued it, it was the kind f mistake anybody could make. Melissa was distressed not to ave everything ready, and Ida Moore understood that. But either Jonas nor Whit could see that it made any difference. However, Jonas said tactfully that he'd wondered this whether Ida was right—and he'd wondered on the w.

had looked in the woods as though it could have been May, but even at noontime, he hadn't been sure: it hadn't *felt* like it.

Jonas and Whit were to sleep in the lean-to, there being no other way in which they could all be disposed. This was entirely agreeable to everyone but Melissa, but when she'd talked it over with Whit, she had seen there was no other way. A few minutes after the Moores had arrived, Jonas and Whit wandered out there to talk.

"She looks pretty good, Whit—your woman, I mean."

"I don't know but she does. How long c'n you stay?"

"Well, I know Ida figures to stay till your woman's well again. As for me, the ground out to my place won't be dried out for seed for another two weeks yet. I could stay for a while—if you think you could stand it."

"I guess I could stand it!"

Jonas looked round at him. "Don't you go to worry. She'll be right."

"Oh, yes, I think so."

"Sart'n she will" Jonas spat cheerfully. "You done any fishin'?"

"Trouts? No, I ain't."

They were standing in front of the lean-to, taking in the late sunshine. There was a chill in the air, but the sunshine was

"Say, look at them dogs, will you?" Jonas remarked

"Jen wants him to play with her. She's a great hand to play."

"What do you call her?"

"Her name is Jen."

They watched for a moment. The big dog—old Major—was annoyed and embarrassed at the way the puppy went on—cavorting and yapping and jumping up at his head. Finally Major lay down and closed his eyes in disgust. The puppy barked at him sharply . . . and then gave him up, and went bounding off toward the house—and fell on her face as she went in the doorway.

Whit said, "The streams are high yet. But then I don't know

s'pose we could try it. 'Twouldn't do any harm. We might some little ones out'n the brook."

You got any worms?"

I got some in a place that I keep 'em to sweeten. It makes more rugged, some people claim."

I got some in my pocket," Jonas confessed.

THE VERY next morning while Whit was down getting er, Mrs Moore came out to the lean-to and shook Jonas ke. "Look here, now, Jonas! You hear what I say?"

onas said, "How c'n I help it?"

Well, I d' know, but you generally do. Listen to me, Jonas: get him out of here."

Jonas said "What?"—and she said it again.

Me get who out of here? Whit, do you mean?"

"Yes"

"Oh." Jonas sat up. "All right, I c'n try to She started in, has ?"

"I shouldn't wonder. She thinks that she has."

"Gorry, you didn't get here no more 'n in time."

"I'm here soon enough. But when things get t' goin', I don't ant him around—hearin' her holler, 'n all that kind of business. ou take him away."

"Couldn't I help you any?"

"No, I don't think it. But don't go too far away. Leave your un here, and if I need you, I'll fire it. And don't you tell Whit, e he won't stir a step. He'd think he oughtn't to leave her."

"Ain't that up to him?"

"No. I told her just what I was doin.' She wants it this way. It'll be easier for her if she don't have to pretend for him that it ain't hurtin' her much."

"He ain't a fool, Ida."

"You do as I say."

"All right," Jonas sighed deeply. "When can we

"Not before suppertime."

"'Suppertime'! God! I'll have to tie him up to a tree!" was standing up now, hitching his breeches up, and adju his belt. "S'posin' I do that—'n s'posin' he gets suspicious s'posin' he comes right out 'n asks me what in hell's goin What'll I say to him?"

... but Jonas's wife had gone back to the house.

Jonas did as she told him. He got Whit down to the pon see if the ice had gone out yet, and they found that it had. J discovered that he had some pork rind in his pocket, and skittered for pickerel along by the shore. The wind was in right quarter to hear a shot from the house, and when Whit a yell hoisted a thirty-inch pickerel forty feet in the air an came flopping down through the branches for Whit to pou on, Jonas felt that his problem was probably solved.

But when it got to be dinnertime, Whit wanted to go up house He said he'd told Melissa that he would be back Jonas assured him that, on the other hand, he'd told that they wouldn't be back. "It's worse to come b when you've told 'em you won't, than not to come back w you've said that you will"

Whit wasn't convinced.

"They won't have nothin' t' eat for you," Jonas insisted, "a they won't take kindly to havin' t' fix somethin' all of a sudd I know my woman don't Most likely they've et. It'd be close to noon by the time you got up there. You better stay here."

Whit said he'd take his fish up with him and fix it himse

"That's all right for you, but I ain't got any fish. You cook here, 'n I'll help you to eat it."

"We didn't bring any salt."

"I did," said Jonas, "I got some in my pocket. You make u fire 'n we'll have us a feed"

"I'll leave you the pick'rel."

"Why're you goin'?" said Jonas, stand

knees. "Because you got your feet wet? You're a hell of a [illegible]man! Make up a fire."

"I'll make up a fire 'n then I'm goin' up."

Jonas said nothing—but he came out to the fire before it was blazing. He said, "[illegible]t's a nice fire."

"There's your pick'rel," said Whit, touching the fish with his [illegible] "You want me to clean it?—'n I'll leave you my gun in [illegible] you're scar't t' be here without one. I d' know why you [illegible]n't bring your'n, but I noticed you didn't. I'm goin' up."

"You're awful pigheaded."

"Maybe I am."

"And on top o' that, you ain't got any manners. Here I come [illegible] the way in here t' make you a visit, 'n then you don't want t' [illegible] with me." He squatted down by the fire and picked up the [pick]erel, whetted his knife on his thigh, and began slitting the [illegible]y. "These here are better if you clean 'em dry."

"Ayuh. Well, I'm goin' along. You goin' t' stay down here the [wh]ole afternoon?"

"Whit, what is your reason? Just tell me your reason. I won't [ar]gue a mite with you—if you got any reason."

"I told you my reason: I said that I'd come."

"*When* did you tell her?"

"'Fore I went down t' get water."

"Well, there you are! There! I said to Ida while you was down [t]h' brook that we wouldn't be back until suppertime. And she's [t]old your woman, 'n they don't look for us to come. Now you set [d]own 'n take comfort. I'll have this feller ready in no time at all." He was tugging away at the entrails, but they were slippery and [t]ough.

"You didn't tell me you planned t' stay here the whole day. You said you wanted t' come 'n see if the ice had gone out. Here it is noontime—or pretty close to it—'n I ain't done any work. I got t' go back."

"'Work'!" Jonas exclaimed. "You ain't got t' work *ever*

Set down 'n stop fussin'." He tore loose the guts and tossed over his shoulder. "You take all the fun out of fishin'."

This was a serious charge and Whit considered it serious

Jonas felt Whit was wavering, and sought to give him a p "What I had in mind," he said, "was after we'd et, to try d below by the mouth of that brook. You can't ever tell what might get a hold of—by the mouth of a brook where it r into a pond." He spitted the fish, and put it close to the fire.

"Why wouldn't it be all right if I went up and came ba

Jonas was caught "Be kind of late, wouldn't it?"

"Best time to fish is the late afternoon. Well, I'll see later—" He turned away from the fire.

"No, Whit, don't go! Whit, listen to me! Whit—I'g reason."

Whit turned around. "All right. What is it?"

"Well—just don't ask me. It's an awful good reason. leave it to me."

Whit came a step closer. "What is it?"

"Well—they're kind of busy up there. Why don't you with me?"

"'Busy'?" said Whit. "What at are they busy?"

"I couldn't say, really. But Ida let on to me that they w goin' t' be busy t'day—both of 'em busy, you understand— for us to stay clear."

"First I heard of it. Whyn't you tell me before?"

"Well, she didn't want me to, to tell you the truth. I wonder but what it might be that they're cookin' up some k of surprise, you might say."

"What kind of surprise?"

"Well, I d' know exactly what kind. It might be one thing, it might be the other. But they don't want us round there un they got it done. *Your* woman don't, Whit. That's what Ida me."

"You ain't makin' game of me?"

"Every last word that I've told you is true."

Whit stared at him hard—and Jonas's eyes fell.

"I don't understand it," Whit said.

"I guess you will by tonight." Jonas was studying the fish and fire . . . He heard Whit draw in his breath—

"You don't mean t' say that today is the day?"

Jonas's heart sank. "Today is what day?" he said into the fire. Whit stepped across to him, and Jonas didn't dare to look up. [H]e took hold of the older man's shoulder and yanked him up to his feet. The boy's face was white. "You know what I mean! [Wh]at why you been keepin' me?—when I told her I'd come?"

"She didn't want you, Whit."

"You—" but he stopped short of saying it. And he flung [Jon]as aside with all the strength that he had—and Jonas went [stag]gering backward through the fish and the fire to land sitting [dow]n. But Whit didn't see that.

Jonas sat still . . . he heard the fading thud of Whit's running, [an]d he wasn't sure but that he heard the boy sob.

He looked down at his shoulder where his shirt was all torn [an]d the marks of Whit's fingers were beginning to show—and [he] stood up without comment.

"Well, I guess I'd better go up there." He picked up the [pic]kerel, and he kicked the fire apart. He took up Whit's gun [an]d started up through the woods. "I could have told Ida that [thi]s was just what would happen," he said aloud quietly "If I'd [st]ood in his room, I'd have busted my head"

He was walking slowly and sorrowfully "He come pretty [cl]ose to calling me out of my name. I'm glad he didn't do that, [b]ecause that is a thing it takes a fight to wash out. There ain't no [ot]her way if you want to stay friends"

Twenty yards farther on, he said, "I hope they're all right" He walked a little more rapidly, but not very much "I guess they [p]rob'ly are," he said.

Jonas saw that Whit, running, had taken a route that was chosen as nicely as he could have picked it himself . . . he was skirting the snow patches and avoiding the steep places, yet adding as little in distance as he possibly could. Jonas [. . .] Whit was scared just the proper amount for his brai[n]

good on something like that. But you try to talk to him, n
try to get him to listen to reason—and you'd be worse off w
you finished than when you begun.

Jonas tried to think of what he himself was about to
counter when he got up to the house. It was bound to be
whatever it was If he should live to a hundred, he'd nev
able to make Ida see why he couldn't have held Whit at the p
That was all she'd asked of him—and he hadn't done it.

He plodded steadily upward, the gun over his shoulder
carrying the pickerel in the other hand by the tail.

When Whit came in sight of the house, he had sickened
running. All the fears for Melissa that he'd known through
winter had been close at his heels as he labored up through
woods. All through the winter he had pushed them back
how. But now he was running, they came on at his back. He
without gaining, he carried them with him.

The pain of his breathing, the pain in his legs, were th
...n't notice. He saw the cabin ahead—

He had approached from the back of it, and when he ca
round to the front—

Melissa stood in the doorway.

She was a ghost Whit had time to believe that she was a gh
Then he saw her face change and she spoke to him, "W
Whit, what's happened? Where's Jonas?"

She wasn't a ghost.

Whit tried to speak, but he couldn't say anything. He
convinced now that she was all right. Nothing had ha...
she looked just the same, anyhow. Nothing had h...
didn't know why. But she'd tell him later. "Jonas?" he sa
and then Ida Moore stood beside her.

Whit got the words out: "Jonas—havin' his dinner—d
'th' pond."

Ida Moore had to first stop and realize that Whit would
have come running if Jonas had drowned. Then, with that

he way, she was able to guess at the truth. She said nothing ...

Whit turned his back on them, and started to go round the ... Melissa started to follow him, but Mrs. Moore held her ... She said, "I know what's happened. It ain't anything bad. ...tell you about it."

... Whit got as far as the woods before he was sick.

When Jonas arrived in the clearing, he saw no one about. Old ... appeared from the lean-to where he'd been asleep in the ..., stretched himself richly, and, wagging his tail, came up to ... master. Jonas put his hand round the dog's muzzle and ...ezed it to make him stay quiet. Then he let go—knowing ... dog wouldn't bark until he was told that he might.

He went toward the house, not causing a sound—and Major ...lowing after him, sniffing the fish.

Outside the door, Jonas halted and listened . . .

He passed through bewilderment, and from that to relief, and ...ally, listening long enough, he acquired some knowledge of ...w matters stood.

He considered an impulse to go back to the pond.

That, he concluded, was the best thing to do

All afternoon Jonas hoped that they'd see it was funny, but ...hen he went back up to supper he found that none of them did.

20

THE DAY Whit had promised—that would bring the ...ring to them—came to them finally, and it was the fifteenth ...y of May.

With Whit, as he stood in front of the lean-to at the morn...ng's beginning—knowing this was the day—there was no ques...tion at all of any attempt to resist it.

This was the spring. There was in the air a sure, ... softness; there was the feel and the color of spring. ...

be now no returning of winter. The trees were dusted
green, a light green but a sure one, and the sunlight was ye
and hazy and warm in his throat. The spring was now in
clearing and it lay on the hills.

Well, they had beaten the winter: they were here for
spring.

He brought up the water and saw to the wood, asked Me
if she felt all right, and heard her say that she did. He p
piece of johnnycake into his pocket. "I thought I might
little ways in the woods."

"You ain't comin' back for your dinner?"

"I might or I mightn't. But I shouldn't think so. I'll fix it
Jonas to know where I am."

She poked at the fire . . .

"All right," she said.

Whit turned to her. "I—" but all he knew of it himself
hat he wanted to be alone in the woods. He couldn't say
her.

She said, "You go ahead, Whit."

"Well—I guess, then, I will." He wanted to thank her, but
couldn't come at it,—and he went out the door and was m
anxious than ever to be away from the house.

But first he went ... p and stirred Jonas awa

Wh...

She w... up my track at that

Whit tri...

convinced now

she looked just the ... to go with it.

didn't know why But ... down toward t

and then Ida Moore stood

Whit got the words out:

'th' pond."

Ida Moore had to first stop and re...
have come running if Jonas had drowned

es on them were away high overhead. The leaves weren't enough yet to put shade on the ground, they only softened sunlight that filled all of the woods The birds were come k now, both big ones and small ones. There seemed to him e a good many birds. He knew the names of three or four ds of them—but beyond that he'd never had occasion to go. re wasn't a thing you could do with a bird, but he was glad ave them about—they were part of the spring.

All over the ground, where his eyes wandered about, there e various flowers. This was the time for them—they were ing the most of their time in the sun before the leaves on trees should shut the sun off from them. He saw a big patch pink moccasin flowers

He was walking barefoot again—and would right along, now would not have a thing on his feet until the other side of the mmer—yes, and the autumn, as well—not until there was w on the ground. That was a long time ahead! This was the ing and there was summer ahead—and then after that umn. . . . There would be no more winter for a good many nths.

Melissa had told him this morning that she was all right. He'd been going uphill a good part of the time, and when he me onto a shoulder, he turned to look back . . . and he was prised to see how the distance now showed in between He de out the smoke from his chimney coming up through the es. He was glad that she'd told him that she was all right.

He went on still farther, working steadily higher—not aight up the ridge, but slanting along up the side The ridge n north and south, and then curved round to the west When 'd come out on the top of it and turn to look down, he'd be king due south.

The top of the ridge was hemlock and pine—with a deer path long it as plain as a road marked with wheels—and he saw that e'd struck the top of the ridge a little bit sooner than he'd hought that he would. He followed along the deer path lowly; there were a few shiny, fresh droppings, and

old dried grayish-green ones that had been under the s[illegible] Even up here, there wasn't a great deal of breeze. Down be[illegible] there'd been none. What wind there was, came full from [illegible] south—and he could feel the warmness it had in it.

There opened ahead of him a great bare place of rock, h[illegible] juniper bushes, and all the sun it could hold. It was the s[illegible] kind of place—though about half again larger—as the p[illegible] where, last autumn, he had looked down on his land. But [illegible] one faced south—in the other direction.

He stepped out on the rock—and there was a wonderful [illegible] from it rising up all around that made him half close his eyes [illegible] took a deep breath of it in a strange, tightening rapture—se[illegible] but dimly and as a part of that which possessed him the [illegible] rolling country that lay outstretched below.

When this moment had passed, and his sight came [illegible] clearly, he was able to think by their names of some of the thi[illegible] that he saw—as Great Ossipy Pond, looking flat and spread [illegible] [illegible], but with a glint of sun on it; that was off to his left—[illegible] [illegible] trees hid the river that ran out of the pond. Right here do[illegible] In front of him—but a good ways below—was a bend of t[illegible] Bearcamp. And over across on the far side of the valley, th[illegible] under the sky to the south, were the Ossipy Hills.

Southeasterly, though, he could look a long ways—over [illegible] gentle jumble of hills of no special distinction, low-lying a[illegible] pleasant, and needing no names. He never had been in that pa[illegible] of the country. Someday he would go there.

The farther off that he looked, the more hazy it was . . . un[illegible] it was a very thin place to see through between the sky and t[illegible] hills—and then you couldn't see through it, they were all [illegible] same thing in the haze of the distance—and there was no cel[illegible] there: just a gentle forbidding that a man should see farther [illegible]

But overhead it was blue!

And near by on the trees there was the new green of th[illegible] springtime, overlaid on the black of the trunks showing throug[illegible] The air between him and the things he was looking at [illegible]

ry and clear: it had a fullness into it—of little bugs and of shine, and a good many smells. You take in the winter, the s empty and bright; but on the first day of spring it has sant things in it.

e laid down his gun then, and sat down beside it—with un on his face, but not quite in his eyes, and with the hard s of his hands pressing on the warm rock—and all that try before him . . .

nd he was grateful to God who had let him be here.

his was the richest day in the year for him Here at hand the spring, rolling up from the south—and following after spring, there'd be coming the summer. He had spent none —not a single day of it—it was all of it coming—unbroken head.

Melissa had told him this morning that she was all right.

From the separate trees down below his eyes would lift of mselves, crossing the river, to the smooth rounded masses of tree-coated hills three or four miles away—and from there he next hills, and so on and on, the hills less distinct, the green ning to gray, until the hills themselves disappeared and he s gazing into the distance where the haze covered everything and then after a moment, the search of his eyes being baffled, eyes would fall back to the things near at hand On the rocks his feet, the lichens were growing; down in a hollow at e edge of the trees, the low blueberry bushes had come into af.

He had dropped an acre of Indian the day before yesterday; e'd be able to see it inside of two weeks Jonas and he had olled the logs up for burning; they had sweat at it, too. He wed Jonas Moore much. The logs would be burning the first eek in June; the fire might help some in fighting the gnats— hough he'd need a smudge in the dooryard. Women and cattle, he flies bothered the most. Another year, maybe, he might a yoke of young oxen. . . . Surely, in a couple of years th

neighbors near by. . . . It wouldn't be a great while before th be a sawmill—and just as soon as there was one, he'd ha house built of boards; he could see the shape of it now. Another five or six years would make an awful big differ

Still, no man could tell what the future would bring.

Melissa, this summer, would be like herself again.

He had expected that for all of this day the presence of sp would occupy everything. It had done so in the past: he'd b contented to wander all day—to wander and sit, and to lie d in the sun.

But now that he had thought of Melissa, he was no lo contented.

He was feeling just as much pleasure in the spring as he had—so he knew it wasn't the spring that was lacking, and it wasn't himself. But while he was enjoying it, he wasn't com it. Something was missing . . .

And he knew what it was: he was wishing that somehow other Melissa could share this.

Standing up, he looked out over the country, and the g beauty of it came to him stronger than ever. And there c with it the certainty—simple and clear—that he was cor about what was the matter. He said then, aloud, "I guess I'll back."

. . . and he picked up his gun, and with his lunch still in pocket, he went trudging over the ledge and down through woods. He still had the spring with him, it was everywhere, about . . . But the pleasure he had of it was touched a little w sadness. It made the pleasure, for some reason, harder to bear

He didn't hurry—that wouldn't do any good. He didn't kn what he would say to her when he got back to the house. might be, when he got there, that he wouldn't go into the He might just get his ax from where it was in the lean-to, go to work in the clearing. He didn't know. . . .

be came into the clearing, Whit saw a strange sight: he
Jonas Moore with the yoke on and two empty buckets pick-
is way down the path that led to the brook. Whit wondered
Jonas was being punished for now. And he hurried to join
enjoying the joke—

What you doin', Jonas? The house ain't afire?"

tand back, boy!" said Jonas. "I got work t' do here." He
ed in a bucket, bent watching it fill, and drew it out drip
, and set it down on the bank. "You want t' know what?
r wife's had a baby."

No!"

nas picked up the other bucket to fill. "You knew she was
to"—and he commenced filling the bucket. He looked up
nd saw Whit was halfway to the house.

da Moore heard him coming and remarked for Melissa, "I
ss this is him now"—and Melissa scraped into a little pile
the strength she could find and resolved to spend the whole
t on one effort for Whit. She heard him come in the doorway
l she saw his face just above her. Now was the time!—and
smiled and raised her hand to him—but she had [illegible]
ace against when she tried to speak. She felt the hardness and
ghness of Whit's hand close on hers—and she [illegible]
t trying to. Then she let her eyes close.

She felt Whit kiss her forehead—and when [illegible]
nd, she was glad that he had. . . .

She lay there in peace and in easement, [illegible]
ake, but knowing that she had done her [illegible]
ot troubled. She was content.

Whit went outside the house—and Mrs. M[illegible]
he stood beside him a moment, waiting to speak [illegible]
was working and his fists were clenched [illegible]

"She done awful good, Whit," the woman [illegible]

Whit nodded.

"And the young one is fine."

Whit said, "That's good."

"You want to see him?"

Whit didn't want to. But when he said, "Ayuh," he knew

he'd got control of himself.

Ida Moore went inside and fetched out the baby. She ha

all bundled up in a great welter of linen which she poked a

with her forefinger to show Whit his son.

Whit peered into the bundle.

"He's a good one," he lied.

"He's the best baby," Ida Moore said, "that I ever see! A

you!" she added, with a peck of her head toward the baby.

Whit hesitated. "You seen a good many?"

"'A good many'!"—and then she looked up at Whit. "

the first one you seen?"

"Yes," said Whit solemnly—and his voice sounded holl

For a second or two, Mrs Moore tried not to do it—but

laughed at him. She hadn't laughed much in the last co

hours.

She put her hand on his shoulder. "Whit, you go off and

down. Everything is all right."

And Whit knew that she meant it, and believed it was so.

was telling the truth.

He went off toward the lean-to, his knees feeling weak,

with a beginning joy in his heart . . .

Jonas left the next day—and Whit went along with him

far as the town line as he was bounden to do and as he alw

had done. They spoke off and on, and didn't see anything. Wh

they were parting, Whit thanked Jonas for coming, and said he

make up the time to him as soon as he could. And Jonas sa

that was all right, and not to worry about it. He said, "We

good-by, Whit," and Whit said, "Good-by, Jonas"—and Jon

called to his dog, and went on his way.

Whit watched him a little—his thin, narrow shoulders, a

his gun under his arm . . . and then Jonas had slipped out

sight round a hemlock.

Jonas Moore was his friend.

Whit turned around and headed back to the house.

Mrs. Moore stayed a week and two days beyond that. Whit ...t out with her to Sandwich. They got a good early start, quit... the house before the sky in the place where the sun would ...e up had begun to look any different from what it did any...ere else.

He found Mrs. Moore was a good one to travel. She'd have ... along faster and easier if she'd have tucked up her skirts, but ... said nothing about it, and Whit supposed that at her age she ... probably used to them. Anyhow: skirts or no skirts, she kept ...r a going, and talked hardly at all, and he had to admire her ...lthough of course he always had.

They stopped by at Beede's for some things Whit was to take ...k with him, and that he put in his bag, and then on down to ... Moores' for some more things that Mrs Moore was to send. Jonas wasn't about. But he had planted the garden.

She urged Whit to stay—or at least to sit down and have ...mething to eat. But he said he didn't feel very hungry, and ...'d kind of like to get back. So she made up the bundle of ...ings for Melissa, and as she was handing it over to him, she ...ld him he'd got to carry it in some special way. He didn't pay ...uch attention. He was trying to think of some way to thank her ...r what she'd done for them this past two or three weeks. But ...e hadn't succeeded when the moment arrived and they stood ...utside the door. "Mis' Moore," he said earnestly, "I—well, I ...hank you. I—I guess you know that."

"Yes, Whit. I know that."

"If you hadn't 've been there, things might have been dif...erent."

"Oh, I don't know."

"Well, I do!—'n so does M'lissa. We're beholden to ... ma'am. We always will be."

"You needn't feel that way. All it was: it happe... was a neighbor. Someday she'll be a neighbor to...

woman. Now, you get along, will you? And you carry t
bundle the way that I showed you! You get along now—or sh
begin wonderin' if you ain't stopped for some troutin' 'n fo
t' come home."

"I ain't goin' t' stop for no troutin'! I wish you'd say to Jo
I was sorry to miss him."

"I'll tell him."

"I'll be out again soon. I owe him some time. He knows t
already. Good-by, Mrs. Moore."

She said, "Good-by, Whit. I'll come again any time that
need me."

And Whit told her thank you, and set out for home.

She went into the house and sat down on a stool in fron
the fireplace. Jonas had covered the fire before he went out.
sat there and stared into the gray, empty fireplace. She felt t
nd old.

After a time, she got up, squaring her shoulders, she w
t getting supper.

Having fixed up the bundle so that it would carry a little
better, Whit settled into his stride . . . and went about th
times as fast as he had on the way out. He never slackened
pace for the whole eighteen miles except when he was crossi
the river. And although the shadows were long when he came
the edge of his clearing, still he'd beaten the sunset by more th
an hour. He called to the house—and he heard her answer.

She came out of the doorway holding the baby in the cr
of her arm—and looking into the sun, she waved Whit a w
come.

He came up beside her, and put down his bundle.

When they had gone into the house, she said, "You get h
home safe, did you?"

"Oh, yes. We had no trouble. She traveled better than
thought that she could."

"Better than I used to?"

"Well, I wouldn't want to say that."

"She has been more kind to me, Whit, than I thought anyone
ald be—save my own mother, and that ain't the same."

"Yes, sir, she has been."

Melissa put down the baby in its place by the hearth, and bent
er it. She said over her shoulder, "Still, I don't know that I'll
nd havin' ourselves to ourselves."

Whit wasn't sure that they had.

PART THREE

The Woods 1770-1777

7

ALL THROUGH that summer and all through the
utumn, and month after month as the winter went on, over
he whole township of Tamworth there was no house except
heirs. There were no thin wisps of smoke from the flat, wooded
intervals; there were no men at all in the Ossipy Hills

But neither Whit nor Melissa was troubled by this. They had
their work to do, right under their hands

Melissa was so much better off than she had been that first
winter—because now her days were made out of something
besides silence, and waiting, and scraping the fat off of skins
—that she felt no rebellion whatever, and she had a good deal
of contentment. To be sure, she looked forward to neighbors,
she'd be glad when they came. But she wasn't complaining about
things as they were.

Sickness, so far, had kept away from her baby. Both she and
Whit knew that in this they were fortunate—although it was
true that they'd both done their part: Melissa had prayed, and
she had taken the best care of the baby that she knew how
take. And Whit—and Melissa, too, on occasion—had used

ous charms. Whit knew more about charms than Melissa any day, and she didn't doubt he'd used some that he hadn't t her about. But over and above all of this, they had needed g luck beyond what any charm would be likely to bring And far they had had it. The baby was rugged and plump, and m of the time he was happy—although there had been times w he wasn't, of course.

But as Melissa looked back at the end of a year, she rea realized that the times she had been frightened hadn't lasted long There had been colic and cramps, and twice the fever been on him—but these had been only short spells, and t hadn't really been bad. Or at least she could see now that t hadn't been bad. Flytime that first summer—not much m than a month after the baby was born—appeared to her n as the worst time they'd been through.

There was no charm, Whit had admitted, that would w lack flies And every night when the black flies would q sundown, the mosquitoes and gnats would come thic ever. For two solid weeks, there had been no escape a where—no escape and no rest. She had kept the cabin as full smoke as she dared to—and when the baby had choked on she'd taken him out in the air. She had greased him well, But his tiny round face had been swollen and bloody, and a part of the time he hadn't been able to open his eyes. And th he'd get so tired out crying that he wouldn't be able to eat had been a good thing perhaps that during that season s hadn't had but a little bit for him to eat.

Whit himself for some reason wasn't greatly affected by fl They had got through it somehow, and by the middle part July, Whit had claimed that there wasn't a fly left in the wood

They had decided that the baby's name would be Jonas. Th part had been easy—there was nobody else. But it didn't seem come easy to speak of him by name. And there was really need for it because with only the three of in doubt as to just who was meant.

Still, his name was young Jonas—and he liked to lie on his
e and chew on the corner of an old linen rag.

Along in September, Melissa had suggested that she didn't
w but what they'd ought to get him baptized.

"Where?" Whit had asked.

"Well, I don't know—I s'pose Gilmanton's nearest."

"Taint what I would call near. It is halfway to Kettleford.
u didn't figure t' take him down there?"

"I will never go back."

"Well, I wouldn't have blamed you. I'd like to show him my-
f. And if someone's got to baptize him, I suppose I'd as soon
e Mr. Gowan to do it as anyone else."

"Why don't you want him baptized?"

"Well, I don't know . . . it's too much like a charm."

"How do you mean?"

"You ever seen 'em?—I mean, have you seen 'em do it?"

"No, I never did. I wished often I could"

"Do you know *why* they do it?"

"I don't know as I do, but I know everyone does it," Melissa
d said.

"I seen 'em do it, I seen Mr. Gowan. They sprinkle water Same
ing as a charm. It don't seem to me right, but I never told him
. Charms are for spirits. They ain't for the Lord"

"I never thought on it."

"I know about charms. When I stand before Him it would
nly make me feel foolish to recollect I had tried to work any
harms upon Him."

"What's it a charm against?"

"Supposed to keep God from sending the baby to hell—tha
s, in case it should take sick and die."

"Oh!"

"Yes, that is just it. I feel just the same way."

But pretty soon she'd said, "Whit . . ."

"Ayuh?"

"It wouldn't be for ourselves."

"I know. I thought of that, too. I said to myself, You got a right to take chances."

"Then what did you say?"

"Well, then I said this: I said, to put a stop to a thing that as awful as that is, you would need a much bigger charm than what *I* seen 'em do. And I don't care who was to work it—Mr Gowan, or who. Hell lasts forever. You think of 'forever' and you'll see what I mean. And Who is it they're *tryin' t'* work the charm on? Sprinklin' water! Why, you could sprinkle the whole of Lake Winnipiseogee and *still* be ridic'lous! They wan't a five minutes. There is an Indian charm that takes three days t' do right—and then don't always work, either—and do you know what it's for? It don't aim at no more than a man getting a deer."

"No, the thing don't look reasonable," Whit had gone on. "You put 'hell' 'n 'forever' 'n 'God' into one side of it, and in the other side is some minister and this five-minute charm, and I can't make the thing balance."

"Maybe there's something more into it than what you know about."

"Maybe."

"Or it could even be, Whit, you ain't figured it right."

"That has happened before."

"And there ain't nothin' t' lose, Whit—not for him, anyhow."

Whit had been silent for quite a while then. "I don't know, but there is." And when she had done her part by saying, "How do you mean?" Whit had tried honestly.

"Well," he had said, "what it comes down to is this: I believe He wouldn't do it—send a baby to hell. I have thought and thought on it, and there ain't any one reason *why* I believe that that can stand by itself. *Still, I believe it.*"

"All right."

"I think I will stick by it. A man ought t' do that much, I think, for his son."

And before she could answer, he had said—his voice very different, "I seen a sign today in that little meadow that they

means a frost in the next seven days. I shouldn't wonder but that maybe we'd get one."

"What was the sign, Whit?"

"Pod o' milkweed."

SPEAKING IN general, Whit could be made to admit, with a second winter behind them, that things might have been worse. He knew himself they were getting ahead. They had a cow and a pig, with stout shelter for both of them, and during the winter just past he had felled enough trees so that if Jonas would help him to burn once again, he'd have cleared seven acres—or maybe a little bit more. That would meet the agreement he'd made with the Proprietors, and it would meet it in two years instead of in three. He had done this without oxen, and without any neighbors—except Jonas, of course—and he felt he'd done well.

He had kept his word better than the Proprietors had—no other settlers, and no sign of a road, and the town not surveyed into ranges and lots. True, it had not been in writing that these things would be done, but the agent had surely let on that they would be, and Whit had hoped that they might. But he hadn't so much as caught a glimpse of the agent since that evening at Jonas's nearly two years ago. Even the cow that the Proprietors *had* agreed to in writing, they hadn't lived up to.

Whit hadn't wanted her much the first winter because he'd have been put to it to feed her. He would have liked to have had her by June, though—and from then on through the summer. But although he had paid Beede to write two letters to them—and Beede'd found someone to carry them, too—yet no answer had come from them. Finally Beede had said in October—when the summer was over and the pasture had gone, "The trouble is, Whit, you can't do nothin' to 'em. All right, they ain't kept their word. But still, what can you do? And another thing --

this may be the trouble—like the agent said, you remember they ain't got a cow handy to turn over to you."

"I don't suppose you would want to sell them one o' yourn for the purpose?"

"Not at a price they'd be willing to pay. They figure a cow at what a cow's worth where they're living. A cow here in these parts is worth an awful lot more. What's a cow worth t' Kettleford?"

"Depends on the cow."

"Well, say, a middling good one."

"I wouldn't know. A middling good one, perhaps, would be seven pound ten."

"That'd be cheap to Kettleford, even. You know the cows that I got. Why, even the brindle—and you know what she is, she's so old and ill-favored I had to blindfold the bull—I wouldn't sell you the brindle for not less than ten pound, Whit."

"I didn't figure to buy one. They agreed to a cow."

"Never mind the agreement. What you want is a cow."

"Sart'n I want a cow. And they owe me a cow."

"I know that well as you do. I wrote it, and witnessed. Well, the brindle's a cow. Would you want to take her? I c'n write again to 'em, and I won't charge you for doin' it. If the Tamworth Proprietors will pay me seven pound in hard money, I will give you the brindle—and my blessing t' boot. They could keep their word that way—and you couldn't say nothin'."

"She took bull in the spring?"

"Ayuh, she did."

"Anything come of it?"

"Not a damn thing."

"Then she must be through."

"She's been as dry for six months as any rock in the pasture."

"Why don't you butcher?"

"I was the one drove her up here from Gilmanton. I never had such a trip in my life. She tried to drown herself twice, and she got loose in a swamp, and she was bogged to her belly three times in one day. What I should've done was to butcher her then.

guess I could a packed in t' meat, and I'd a been better off. But wanted to show her I was as stubborn as she was. I showed her! brung her!—every foot of the way. And at the end of it when stuck her head in the yard here, I give her a great kick, and I s to her, 'There! Now then, my beauty, who come out on the p?' Ever since then, I have been kind of fond of her. I ouldn't want to eat her; she is more like a pet."

"They agreed to a cow."

"Well, then, let's get down to business. I shouldn't wonder at the Tamworth Proprietors might *pay* seven pound—if I was write to 'em proper—to be free of this business. If you took e money and put some more money with it, I could sell you cow that would do you pretty good."

"Which one?"

"The dun one."

"How much would you want?"

"I would sell you the dun one for seven pound more."

"How old is she?"

"Four."

"She milkin' now, is she?"

"Well, she's taperin' off."

"I wouldn't want her until she was with calf Nor I wouldn't y she was fourteen pounds' worth of cow"

"I ain't gettin' fourteen I'm gettin' seven from you. And you an pay it in fur, if you want to, next spring."

Whit had finally bought her—giving his claim against the Proprietors, plus two pounds and six shillings to be paid off in fur, three days of labor, and ten pounds of cheese.

Beede had never confessed what he'd got for the claim, and Whit had begun to suspect that maybe Beede'd got nothing. This had made him feel better about the whole thing

Melissa had said that she would wean the baby most likely as soon as the cow was milking again.

The cow dropped a bull calf on the twenty-ninth day 1771, sometime before morning in a place she'd ch

—a little thicket of hemlocks near a stand of beech trees ab
a quarter of a mile up the brook from the house. Whit found
soon after breakfast—or rather the dog found her for him—
Whit carried the calf back to the house in his arms. He had
tie up the cow while he brought in the calf for fear she'd m
trouble.

Whit was pleased with the calf—although he hadn't wanted
bull calf—and he was proud of the cow because she had do
well. But the calf delighted Melissa out of all reason. She was
pleased as she'd been when he'd brought her the dog. W
hadn't been at all sure that he'd want to raise a bull calf, but
doubted now that he'd have any choice. He went back for
cow and he led her home slowly, but she appeared to be able
travel all right.

After supper that evening, he reckoned the date with Melis
and cut it into one of the logs in the wall of the house with h
knife.

It was about three weeks after this that he went out to Bee
and about the first thing he told Beede was that the dun cow
had her calf.

When Beede inquired if Whit figured to raise him, Whit sa
he hadn't made up his mind yet; he didn't know but he woul

Beede said, "I think I would, probably, if I was in your roo
I hear you're goin' t' have neighbors. He'll be handy for them
He'll be more handy than mine would."

"Who are they?" said Whit.

"Philbrick and Eastman, and Jackman, and Choate."

Whit didn't know one of them. He wanted to ask Beede if
they were good men. But he guessed maybe that that wouldn't
do. When he saw Jonas, he could find out from him.

The next afternoon Whit was down weeding corn, and the
dog keeping him company, when she began to bristle and grow
as she would have for a man. Still, a man was the last thing tha
Whit ever expected to be stirring round in the woods—and he
moved toward the stump where his rifle was resting. He waved
the dog down, and she crouched and was quiet . . . they waited

moment . . . then they heard someone hail. Whit answered in [illegible]—and the dog apparently feeling that she was released, [spr]ang to her feet and set up a great barking. Whit said, "Jen, [hus]h! Lay down!"—and she gave over her barking. But she didn't [lie] down.

The man came out of the woods then, and into the clearing, [an]d hesitated a moment because the sunlight was bright.

He was the scrawniest, littlest man!

Whit could see that Melissa had come to the doorway—and [he] looked forward to later when she'd tell what she'd thought.

The man came on through the clearing toward where Whit [wa]s standing; he was carrying his gun as though it were a heavy [thi]ng, and he was limping a little as if he had a sore heel. He [wa]s thin-cheeked and dirty, and his beard sparse and [illegible], [hi]s torn leather shirt was without any fringe and his [illegible] [to]o big for him. He looked like a man who'd been thrown out of [a]ll because it wasn't worth while to keep him. Whit knew who [he] was now: he had seen him round Sandwich but it had never [oc]curred to him to ask what was his name. He was a [illegible], all [ri]ght, no one could mistake him.

Twenty feet off the man stopped [illegible] and standing a [li]ttle lopsided because of his heel, he said to Whit [illegible], "[illegible] Dutiful Jackman." He had a bad fly [illegible]

Whit almost laughed—but he didn't [illegible] "[illegible] [Fi]eld Livingston."

"I guess I seen you to Sandwich," Jackman [illegible]

"I shouldn't wonder. I heard you [illegible] [h]ouse. I'll tell my woman t' fix you [illegible] [a]ny drink."

Dutiful Jackman nodded his head. "[illegible] [illegible] thought it might be a joke. He's a [illegible] Moore is."

"Ayuh," said Whit, "I guess [illegible]"

The dog had sniffed at the man, and [illegible] Whit didn't blame her: he was [illegible]

Melissa fed Jackman, but it was between dinner and sup and Whit didn't eat. And she kept a watchful eye on the b lest Jackman should poke at him.

The little man ate with a woebegone air—which Melissa down to the absence of rum. Whit thought it was probably cause his mouth hurt him—his teeth, in the front, being ro away.

When Jackman had finished he thanked them both kindl and then sat perfectly still in front of the fire.

Whit asked him where his land lay.

Jackman confessed that he didn't have any land. He'd ha in mind, he said, to make a pitch somewhere and Beede'd gested that he look around here.

"You mean right around here?—or the township of T worth?"

"Well, Tamworth, he said."

Whit wondered how much the agent would pay Beede ckman. He didn't look to him to be worth very much. "T amworth," he said, "has got plenty of land in it. You c over some of it on your way in"

"I come over a lot of it, it seemed to me like. I got an a bad stone bruise right now on my heel."

"I noticed you did have. Whereabouts did you figure on or hadn't you yet?"

"I thought maybe you'd tell me. I guess you know more a it round here than most anyone does."

"All right, I'll tell you." Whit took out his knife and about to draw with the back of the point in the smooth di the floor.

"You could see better outside," said Melissa.

But Whit had already begun to see the map in his mind, he scarcely heard her. He said, "I can see all right here," an went on with his map. He was trying to draw it as true a could. He had to do this. For one thing, he owed it to country itself.

He began explaining to Jackman as he went along. "He

he mountain—she lays about north—and Bearcamp River, ay, would come along about here."

The two men were squatting like frogs on the floor, with their s up to their ears, and very intent. Jackman was nodding his to everything that Whit said, and occasionally snuffling wiping his nose on the back of his hand.

"And here's where we be now." Whit drew with his knife ttle square for his land—and Melissa looked over his lder.

He had finished the map. It was about a yard square. "Now, ," he said, and he got down on his knees. "There is three es, mainly, where there's interval land. The first place is ." And he set the palm of his left hand squarely down on map. "Maybe you crossed that one on your way in."

"I guess prob'ly I did."

"The second one's here—" and he showed where that lay; it more to the eastward. "And the other one's here—" and he his hand on it. He was seeing the land he was talking about. Melissa, not knowing the land, saw only the map that was re on the floor.

In no case had Whit's hand come anywhere near to that little are he had marked as his own.

Jackman said, "Ayuh, I see how it is"—and he got up stiffly cause he was tired.

Whit, still on his knees and bent over the map, was going on king. "Scatterin' places," he said, "there is other ones smaller. t if I was in your room, I think what I would do would be to where I have showed you."

"Yes," Jackman answered, "I guess prob'ly I will Ma'am," he d to Melissa, "I thank you for supper."

"You're welcome," she told him—and Whit looked up from he map. He looked from one to the other as though he'd missed mething, and then he said to Jackman, "You ain't goin' now, re you? Don't you want to lay here?"

"That's kind of you, too. But I don't mind t' lay

picked up his gun from where it stood by the door.

Whit got to his feet. He was still puzzled. "Well, if
locate, come by here again."

"All right," said Jackman, and went out the door. He glan
toward the cowshed, and then down over the clearing—wh
the shadows were soft in the late afternoon. "You got a
place here. Your corn's comin' good."

"Ayuh," said Whit.

"Well, I wish you good night"—and he went down thro
the clearing, lugging his gun and limping a little on accoun
his heel....

3 THE OTHER three men of whom Beede had spoke
their names were Philbrick, and Eastman, and Choate—c
during the summer but didn't stay through the winter. The
they came to Tamworth, Philbrick was the only one of the
who actually came to Whit's house.

Whit took to Philbrick—and so did Melissa. He was a ki
man, gentle and strong. "David Philbrick," he told them.
Whit stood in the doorway with Melissa behind him, but
to see. And they never forgot the good sound of his voice.
was a man who was heavier than Whit was, taller, and thic
and with more age on him, too. He was fair-haired and w
shouldered, and his face was burnt a red brown. He hadn't s
all his time in the woods, he had been working somewher
the sun.

He stayed all through the evening—and they talked
midnight. It was apparent that Philbrick wasn't a great one
talking, but Whit and Melissa weren't choosey at all—an
was a lot better than Jackman! No one was distressed tha
silences lasted until some one of the three had thought of
thing to say.

Whit went with him next morning to look
borhood. And he found the man traveled slo

ame as he talked. Philbrick said he'd already been over a l part of the township, and so they only covered the northern part. That took them all day. So far, Whit liked the man. couldn't quite figure why this sort of man should want to go eering, but that was surely none of his business and he 't ask.

Then they got back to the house, Melissa'd fixed a great er. She'd been at it all day. She had spruced up the baby in an inch of his life, and she'd put the house in such order Whit didn't dare to speak of it. She'd even cleaned off the

ater on after supper, and the baby asleep, Whit asked her ng for them She said nothing at first—for so long that Whit 't know but in some way he'd made a mistake She hadn't e any singing for quite a long time, except for the baby. But ry soon she got going, and she sang very well.

They tried to get Philbrick to sing, but they found he was too to Whit said he didn't sing, either.

Philbrick said the next morning that he'd give Whit a day's k to pay Whit for putting in yesterday showing him round. hit said this wasn't necessary, but that he'd be glad of some p.

Whit had had in mind for some time that when the sow was farrow, they'd be in need of a place for the pigs that would be e from bears. He couldn't expect to be there himself every e they came round. The sow was due in September, and this s now August. He hadn't got at it because of everything else, d now that he had someone to help him, it looked like a good ance.

Philbrick proved to be a comfortable man to work with. He d a good head for planning, and he was a clever man with an . Between them that day they laid up a log house with walls o feet in thickness and a roof of logs over it that would give y bear pause. It had a heavy door to it that worked up own, and they drove stakes all around it so that the pigs

root out. Whit was so pleased with it that he said he woul mind to live in it himself—that is, if he could move in th before the sow did.

They had only one mishap. Philbrick fell down while he carrying a log, and his knee slipped out of joint. He was in pain for some minutes, but he knew what to do—and Whit there to do it, they got it back in. Then Philbrick go and went on with the work. He said it happened now and a and that he was well used to it.

Being another man's weakness, Whit didn't like to talk o—and didn't even tell Melissa about it until the next mor when Philbrick had gone

She said Whit ought to have told her—that she could h bound up his knee. She was put out about it more than W would have thought But Whit said he guessed Philbrick co look out for himself: he had never worked with a man who as able as he. They'd be lucky, he said, if they got him fo [illegible]or.

Philbrick had told him that he'd be back before long prob and true to his word, he was back in two weeks. He had take land about a mile to the north of them on some flats that th were near the head of the pond He said he favored the there; it was richer than most. And Whit guessed that he pr ably had in mind to try flax.

He only stayed a few minutes, and then went on to his Whit went to bed that night feeling more confident ab things in general than he had for some time.

Each day they expected that Philbrick would come ove visit; but he didn't, and when a week later he still hadn't c Whit said he guessed he'd go up there and see how he was ing. It wasn't five minutes after that—Whit was eating his per—that they heard Philbrick's gun.

Whit considered a moment—the direction and d. and then he said to Melissa, "Be a deer, I should think. a great place for 'em there in that swamp just this side o

They lay in there in the daytime, specially when it's so hot, hen come out about now to feed along the edge of the pond. rick, most likely, was on that little sandspit. That's about e the shot come from. He'd have cover to lay in, and he see either way."

elissa said yes, that was probably it.

Vell, I guess I won't go up now. He'd only figure I come for scent of meat."

don't think he would, Whit."

at Whit wouldn't go.

hings having started to happen, they kept right on happen- Inside of an hour, Jonas Moore had appeared It was two ths, or more than that, since they had seen Jonas, but he ldn't come in, and he wouldn't sit down; he said he was on ay in to Philbrick's: he'd stopped to ask Whit the way.

Whit told him the way.

All right," said Jonas. "Well, I'll get along. You two look ty good. So does he, for that matter—" Melissa was holding baby and he was jumping up and down in her arms

You comin' back here t'night?" she inquired of Jonas.

I shouldn't wonder."

Mis' Moore all right, is she?"

Yes, she's pretty good."

Melissa asked—meaning Philbrick, "He ain't got any ble . . . ?"

Well, he has, and he hain't, in a way, you might say I c'n tell better, perhaps, when I come back by here About a mile, you l, Whit?"

'Bout that. I should think."

Melissa said "What—" but Whit interrupted her. "Let him ," he said curtly.

Jonas didn't want it to look as though Whit had spoken for n He said, "Well, I guess a half minute won't do any ey all of 'em know this to Sandwich; it ain't any - man left him, as I guess you know, about a year in."

"No," Whit said, "I didn't."

"Well, she did, anyhow. Feller from Manchester. She went with him and took their two young ones right along, too. Philbrick's 'n hers, I mean. Girls, I was told."

"No!" Whit was astonished. "Why did he let her?"

"Who? This Manchester feller?"

"No, Philbrick, I mean. They were his children."

"Oh, there wan't any question of that. I guess she just up 'em."

"He'd ought to gone after them."

"Well, I don't know. I'm only telling you the way that I it."

"He'd ought to gone after her and brought her back, too."

"What the hell for?—if she was that kind."

"I would have," said Whit, "if I'd been in his room."

"You'd a had to cut holes in your hat, then, for the rest of life. Once they get that way, there ain't any stoppin' 'em. A who'll keep one of that kind is just a plain fool. Way I look it, anyhow. Still, it don't matter with this one because now she dead. That's what I come to tell Philbrick. His sister sent word. She's got the two young ones. I guess she don't want 'em no more 'n what the Manchester feller most prob'ly did. Way I got the message, was that if Philbrick didn't come get 'em, she had a mind t' turn 'em out on the town. Still, I don't know what Philbrick c'n do with 'em. Man brought the message to me, come from Gilmanton. He wan't the one that had had it from her. Well, I got t' go tell him. I guess he'll be interested. I'll stop by visit some on my way back. That's more 'n you done for Whit, the last time you was out. Or *wan't* it the last time?" grinned at Whit.

And Melissa there in the doorway, who could see over the shoulders, said, "This is him comin' now."

Both men looked up at her—saw her staring past then turned around to see what it was that she saw.

It was Philbrick, all right—carrying a

from his gun barrel—they could see the shank of it stick-
out to one side.

has made some exclamation—but neither one of the other
uttered a sound.

hen Philbrick got up to them, he nodded to Jonas, and he
to Whit quietly, "I brought you some meat."

That was kind of you. I thought that was your gun. Up at the
of the pond?—'bout an hour ago?"

yuh."

Whit took the meat. "You dressed out awful quick. I'll go
this here up. I'm obliged to you, surely." He went off toward
hed with the meat on his shoulder.

ood-lookin' meat," Jonas commented.

You come in from Sandwich?"

Yes Matter o' fact, I was comin' t' your place."

Was you?"

nas saw that Melissa had gone into the house "I brought
a message. Your woman's been sick" He was not looking
hilbrick.

hilbrick said nothing.

Fever," said Jonas. "It come on her sudden. Still, the way that
ard it, her sister got there."

seemed a long time to Jonas, but finally Philbrick said,
hen?"

Four days ago."

here was another long silence, but at last Philbrick spoke.
said, "Thank you for bringin' the message"

Twan't any trouble. You want t' go back to your place? I
d go along with you a ways, if you'd like . . ." but he saw
Philbrick wasn't quite ready for that; Philbrick just now
dn't hear what he was saying

here was nothing to do but stand there and wait. Jonas knew
it wouldn't come back until they were finished. There
sound from the cabin.

resently Philbrick said, "She was a good woman."

And Jonas said, "Yes."

After a moment, Jonas thought fit to add, "Her sister word your two girls is to her place. I guess maybe she fi you would want to come get 'em. Winchester, ain't it?"

He thought Philbrick nodded—but he couldn't be certai

Then Philbrick turned round to Jonas and made an eff speak. He failed on the first try, but then he succeeded. be glad to see them," he said. He meant it, all right; it wa the words that were difficult.

"Sart'n," said Jonas. "And they'll welcome you, too"

But Philbrick had done all the talking he could. He p up his gun and started down through the clearing, not the that he'd come, but heading toward Sandwich—and from down to Winchester.

Melissa came to the doorway and said, "Ain't you goin' with him?"

"I don't know as he wants me."

"You go with him," she said.

"Maybe I had better I'd had in mind though to stay here visit."

"Well, we'd like t' have you But I think you'd better go."

"All right," said Jonas—and he set out after Philbrick.

4 ONCE AGAIN they faced winter without any neigh Melissa had thought she'd be used to it now. But with the wet and black in the month of November and the whole wi to come, she knew that she was afraid. And as the great strea of the winter came closer around them, she began to live o in what she could see—the day right ahead, the work she doing, and whatever it was that she'd have to do next.

Whit seemed to her to be less given to talking than ever would come from a day in the woods, eat and then sit by the fire, not saying that made a regular noise—not

ing a gap from his ax with a file. And he'd stand in the f before going to bed, letting the cold come into the hing out at the night for three or four minutes, utterly l. and then he'd turn back into the room again without word. It made it worse, too, that he didn't know that he If she'd asked him not to, he'd have looked hurt and d, and have said he was sorry.

tavern in Kettleford, it had been bright in the evening. ad been talking and laughing, and the men often had here had been news there of Portsmouth, and sometimes on. Some of the men had been kindly disposed—like l, for instance, and Ensign Lord, he was pleasant—and nd Gillmor had been funny, in truth. Oh, she could re- r the other things, too—the hawking and spitting, the the floor. But those weren't the things that she tried to ber—those weren't the things that came back of them-

seldom thought of Joe Felipe, for example, drunk and in the taproom in Pennacook. But she did think of Joe e wood on his shoulder, and she thought of Joe on that n the road with the wind in her face when Joe had been her—and she'd sent him away And Joe had gone, too. would think sometimes of Joe and of Whit, facing each —when she had come down the stairs and there they were both of them shaken and ready to fight That had been e But it hadn't lasted long, it was very soon over, and it rned out all right.

didn't want to go back to Kettleford She had no thought never of that. It wasn't so much that she remembered her —it was more that her father was there all the time—in eford, that is. His presence in Kettleford was a part of her he would never go back.

t still she remembered the pleasant things there. She had to something to think about daytimes when Whit would be d the baby asleep and the sound of the wind in the trees d rise over the silence and she'd see the gray ashes in the

fireplace make little whirls. Those were the times when of her loneliness would come on her hard—and her mind reach out to take hold of the things that she liked to re Some of those things she used a good many times.

They had a spell of cold weather toward the middle uary that Whit said beat anything he'd ever seen. He dare to do any chopping for fear that his ax would bre in two. He wouldn't even tackle a white pine—and he chop maple that was so hard that his ax only bounced. S was easy, but he couldn't chop.

He kept telling Melissa of these signs of the cold, seemed to take pride in them.

She knew it was cold. She got up in the night once some milk for the baby, and the hem of her skirt in th while she knelt at the fire, froze stiff as a board where th had wetted it while she was in bed.

She told Whit in the morning, and although she hadn't to, she got to laughing about it, and then wanted to cry

They fought the winter—day after day. They thou March they were winning. They hadn't lost even so much pig.

There was a trapper stopped by and ate dinner about the week in March. He had just come from Fryeburg and was way out to Sandwich. He said that in Fryeburg they had bad time of it. About every man had been sick, he said, th

Two days after that, Whit took a chill, and fever to fol not enough fever to put him out of his head. for it, and at the end of three days he was able to stand feet. But then Melissa took her turn—and before she was it, the baby had sickened. Whit took care of them both. He he felt all right, although not very steady.

By the time they were better, it was more or less spring

When Whit got out to Sandwich, he learned that the tr had only made it to Beede's by the skin of his teeth. He'd left pack on the trail—Beede'd sent a man out for it—and two

Beede's, he'd left his gun in a tree. They said he'd come
yard on his hands and his knees. Beede himself had been
that took care of him—claimed he knew better than
else, and wouldn't even let one of his people so much as
the man. It was highhanded, of course, but that was the
de was. And the trapper got better. There was that about
they generally did.

ne in Sandwich had died the whole winter. But they said
Fryeburg there had four of them died. Beede was proud
Sandwich, he said, had beaten Fryeburg for once. Frye
s windows in his house in Fryeburg. "But," said Beede,
, none of my men are dead!" He was mightily pleased

d then he remembered he had a letter for Whit. He went
it—he said he'd had it a month.

e outside of it, under the dust and the dirt, was written
s W Livingston in the Township of Tamworth", it was
small thing, and the seal chipped and broken There was
ig how long ago it left Kettleford—Whit didn't doubt
nute that that was *where it was* from He said to Beede,
ou anything on it?"

not a thing. Jonas Moore *brought* it. He told me, I guess,
as left it with him, but I *don't* remember. If Jonas paid
ou c'n square it with him"

t took off his hat and put the letter inside it "She c n read
better 'n I can," he said, and put the hat on again All it
obably, was old Butler was dead.

ad a hard trip going home because he was so we k When
e in, he set his hat on the table and undid his p ck to show
things that he'd brought.

was pleased by them, but they didn't seem to ave hold
e way they did sometimes. He was disappointed in
e supposed she was tired.

was tired himself He was so tired that he felt kind
shed back from the table and said, "I'm goin' t
on't you . eat? I have kept it all ready"

"No, I don't think it. I'll eat when I wake up." He too
up off the table and the letter fell out. "Oh! There now,
"I guess I forgot."

She'd seen the letter.

He said, "That's for you."

She didn't appear to know what it was. She looked at
—and she looked up at Whit.

He wanted to say, "Well, it's a letter. Don't you wa
what it says?" But instead of that he took up the sack o
the table to put it away—and from the other end of the
asked, "What does it say?"

Melissa reached out her hand for it, and Whit, from w
was standing, saw her break the seal and hold the pap
the light . . . and while she was reading he came over slo
stood by the edge of the table again. . . .

When she had finished, she laid down the letter, and
to the fire She said, "Pa is gone."

"I didn't know but what that might be it." He took off
clothes—he'd been soaking in sweat—put on some dry
lay down on the bed.

"Matthew Patten," she said, "is the one wrote the
says he was bringin' in wood and fell down—and
was dead."

"Well, that's one way. And he had time to repent
pulled up the bearskin. "Why was he bringin' in wood?
knew him do that."

"He'd been livin' alone there, so Patten says."

"Not even a housekeeper? That don't sound right. Wh
become of his money?"

"I couldn't say. Patten says he'd been alone ever s
that we left. He quit keepin' tavern and let the place
'n everything. The vendue won't bring enough—I guess
had it by now—to pay what he owed t' Portsmouth for
like that."

"What about them that owed him?"

"The letter don't say."

ll, if he hadn't collected it, I guess nobody could. I mean
l man."
h."

she sat by the fire.
en is square," Whit said. "When he says a thing's so, you
end on it that that's just about it."
m."
l—you comin' t' bed, are you?"
, pretty soon."
was thinking of Kettleford and its fields in the sun, of the
at ran through it, and the people near by, and of how
talk to each other a dozen times in a day. She had seen
d things of the village when she was a girl, but they had
een hers because her father was there. He wasn't there
e would never be there again. She thought of the houses
: people in them. Even in winter there were always sleds
road. And in the summer, the great fields in the sun . .
le, rolling fields that sloped down to the river, and a score
ses and barns to be seen from the hill. Joe Felipe would
re, probably—poor Joe Felipe!—she smiled when she
t of him. The Kettleford women, she'd never known—
at would be different now her father had gone.
felt the cold at her shoulders and through all of the room.
ought of her baby, and the great woods all around
eemed to be summer in Kettleford . . .
t said, "What's the matter? Do you want to go back?"
s"—and her hands on each side of her clung to the edge
: bench She was glad she had said it!
en the silence lasted too long She would scream in a min-
he didn't speak.
e could go back," he said. "Yes—we could go back. We
sell what we got done here for enough to get a place there.
land mightn't be much but there'd be some in fields any-
'n there'd be a board house 'n a pretty fair barn. They's
onnecticut there is farms awful cheap. Yes, we co
There ain't nothin' to stop us at that end, anyhow."

"Do you think," said Melissa, "we could sell this enough to get just that meadow that—well, the one raked?—'n maybe a woodlot? I don't mean any house build just a little house there on the rise. Would you thi that we could do that?"

It took him some time, but he said, "I should think might."

He threw off the bearskin, and sat up on the "I won't pretend that I wouldn't sooner stay here. that, I guess."

Slowly and painfully, he got to his feet. Melissa him, but she didn't turn round.

He said, "I want t' keep on with what I have as I can, I want t' work for us both. If I can't do that we'll go somewheres else If everything that I do here, thing I put up—like a new barn 'n so on, or clear ground—if the things that I plan on mean only to you got that much less chance to get out of here—why, better go. If you feel that way about 'em, they ain't to me."

"Well, we ain't goin' t'night," she said, "you into bed."

He made no answer at all; and after a moment she get back into bed. She still sat in front of the fire. She she had hurt him. But there were these things now that to say: "I hear the wind in them spruces times when you I wouldn't pay no heed to it—no matter how much it there was someone else round—some other could say to, 'That wind makes a racket,' and she w 'Yes' And times when he's sick and I don't know w Or when you're here even 'n don't say nothin' at all end, Whit. That's when I want to go back. I don't m work; I c'n do that all right. It's nobody to talk to. It's hear talk. I get lonely, I tell you. You don't understand."

Whit said, "No, I don't. Well, then, we'll go back."

"You really mean it?"

in it, yes."

a moment, she got up and went to the door; she stood oorway and lifted her head, feeling the wind as it blew e south. . . .

heard her go out.

y there in misery.

a she came in, she said, "'Twon't be much more'n a ow 'fore you c'n plant. Maybe not down by the brook, garden you can."

more he sat up on the side of the bed.

a was banking the fire. "If I don't have to stay," she don't want t' go back."

WHIT'S STRENGTH returned as the summer came on, and e realized one evening that he'd done a day's work and pretty good, then he knew he was well.

Indian corn was more promising now than it had been r at this time, and he had a good deal more of it. He'd garden and they would soon have some sauce from it. his place as a whole, he was now about even with Jonas. dn't affect their relationship greatly. It certainly didn't on side. And the principal change in Whit's feeling was that he felt capable, now, if need should arise, of repay- ne of the things that Jonas had done for him. Jonas was e better man in the woods, and both of them knew it. It always be so until Jonas got old. Even then he would not s knowledge and cunning.

for the rest of the town: Mark Jewell's son— he was Mark l, Junior—was building a house near the top of a hill in stern part of the township, and Eastman and Choate—who pent the winter in Sandwich—had come onto their land , and were going ahead. Even Dutiful Jackman, who tred somewhere or other, had come back again ng a pitch. He had put up a lean-to and girdled

old

ney

RING STONE

6 THROUGHOUT THAT autumn of 1772 and the two ters that followed, Whit hunted alone. Philbrick wasn't a hu His brother Jonathan—who came later on—had the nam being a hunter. But David was more of a man to do work. D could shoot well enough, and he knew the country, but a could outguess him more often than not, and Whit told Me that he thought that foxes *tried* to get Philbrick to hunt t Whit got in the way of doing the hunting for both families, Philbrick was careful to repay him in work.

The dog Jen was now of an age to be really some use. She three. *Another two years and she'd be in her prime.* She proved a still-hunter, just as Beede had said. That is, she d use her voice any when she was working a track. When W heard her bark, he knew she had her game

This was the fourth winter since they had come. It was best winter Whit had had yet. Because of hunting for Philb as well as himself, he spent nearly twice as much time in woods as he had before, and yet it paid him to do it.

He got more work done that winter than in any winter so Philbrick never came over unless Whit was there. They bui log barn that would hold a half dozen head, and they put a fl in the cabin made of logs split and hewn.

What Whit wanted the most was oxen and boards. If he h oxen, he could get rid of his stumps, he could clear better, a also he could plow. And if he had boards, he could build a fr house.

Melissa, meantime, was expecting again. She figured on pro ably the third week in October—and it turned out she was ri Mary Philbrick came over and showed herself to be as know and able as they'd had every reason to expect her to be. It d take so long this time, and Melissa was up and about soon than she had been before.

Hez Hackett, the hunter, stopped by in November. He a mired the baby. "He-one, ain't it?" he said to Whit. "That's wha I heard. Now you got two of 'em. You're doin' all right!"

He was a single man older than Whit—a plump little man, ut very good on a track and an excellent shot. Whit still did the ...ting for himself and for Philbrick, but Hackett killed most f the meat for the rest of the town. Eight families, he hunted ...r.

Melissa smiled on him pleasantly. She cared nothing whatever r Hackett's opinion, but she'd be willing he'd carry a good re... ort of the child

"You look pretty spry," Hackett answered her smile. "How ...g ago was it?"

"Three weeks," said Whit. "Seventeenth day of October, 74"

"Three weeks!" exclaimed Hackett. "My, ain't he come on!" ...e poked at the baby, and then turned to Whit. "A boy's a great ...ing when a man's runnin' traps, ain't he?"

"I expect so," said Whit. "My two are still young"

Hackett cast a glance round. "Where's the other one hid ...mself?"

"Prob'ly out in th' shed."

"Shy, is he?"

"Maybe."

"Most of 'em is But what I mean about trappin'. the way ...ings are now, a ten-year-old boy c'n go int' th' woods, 'n you ...n't got to fear for him."

He explained to Melissa. "My old man always fretted for fear ...d get took. I never did, though." And then he remarked to them ...enerally, "It was the money that worried him most They never ...one nothin' to children at all—that is, the ones that could ...avel. Sometimes they kep' 'em, 'n sometimes they sold 'em. 'Twas only men growed that they burned 'n like that." And he ...dded to Whit, "John Stark come from down your way. He c'n ...ell you 'bout Indians"

Whit said, "Londonderry, he come from. I'm a K... ...f ...man. He left there two years before I was born anyho... ...was the year they had him five weeks to St. Francis. I ...about it a good many times."

"I suppose so," said Hackett. "Well, I'd ought to get on. I of meant to stop by here 'n see how you was doin'. Now I ca people that you're doin' good."

"You better stay 'n eat supper."

"Well, that's awful kind of you." He glanced at Meliss saw she approved; he liked Whit and her both, and the f would be good; there wouldn't be any rum—but a man coul have everything, and Whit understood hunting. Hackett s that he'd stay.

"Your dogs with you?" Whit asked.

"They're outside with yourn. They get along good. She a deer with 'em one day there last week. A doe, but they lost h

"I wondered," said Whit. "She come home tuckered out." sat down with Hackett at one end of the fireplace, leaving rest of it free for Melissa to work.

The men settled to talking. Hackett told Whit of each pl where he'd recently seen any sign of a panther or wolves, Whit did the same in return. Whit said he thought that panther were lessening. (He knew very well that the wol had increased.) They talked together of the state of game ge erally. And just as they did every time that Whit saw him, th talked of Whit's rifle and of what it would do. Hackett was quite ready to say that he wanted one, but he was pretty close it. Whit's was the third rifle that Hackett had come across i side of two years—and all owned by good men. There was Baker's River man owned one, in the township of Romney, fi miles west. And Frye himself did—but of course he was a ri man and could afford to own anything. There were some men Tamworth owned no gun at all.

Whit saw that young Jonas had put a foot in the doorwa Another five minutes, and he'd be inside.

Not till Melissa had finished getting ready the supper d Hackett start in on the news of the town.

He knew where there was sickness and what they should d for it—and sometimes they were doing it, and sometimes the were not. He knew how the work at each place was progressin

how they were fixed now that winter was near: how much m, and so on, and the state of their cattle, if any, and what kind shape their houses were in.

"I see Jonathan Philbrick—that brother of David's—two-three times in the woods. He ain't started a house Five weeks he's been here, 'n he's still layin' out. He ain't much like his brother"

"I ain't seen him but twice."

"First time I seen him I thought he was a bear, 'count of his size and shagginess. Then when I see the size of him, he looked more like a moose."

"What did you think he was when you hear him talk?"

"You know, he ain't a liar," said Hackett. "Them things that he brags of, I b'lieve he has done—at least a part of 'em."

"You b'lieve them bear stories?"

"No. But if you c'n believe a bear story, it ain't any good."

"Fourteen in one season!" Whit said with disgust

"He'll tackle a bear, though. He ain't afraid B'God, if he had enough rum in him he'd tackle fourteen"

"I shouldn't wonder. The way he looked t' me he was wild enough to."

Hackett refused to give in. "He's a kindhearted man."

"Drunk or sober, you mean?"

"He's kindhearted sober, but he's more generous drunk You heard him sing, have you?"

"No"

"Bellers a lot, but they're pretty good songs Some of 'em are funny. He'll even sing in the woods"

"Sing in the woods?—when he's goin' along? Sounds like a Frenchman. And you claim he ain't wild!" Whit took up again what they'd been saying before "You'd say that, in general, people 'd be all right until spring."

"I would think so," said Hackett "But they're liable t' be hungry between spring and a crop."

Melissa stood leaning against the chimney and li… was some time since she'd seen a man talk while…

would remember each word that he said, though. Each bit a each item she would think about later, tomorrow and next d probably a good many times. She did like to hear what ot people were doing.

Hackett told them of Sandwich and a few things abo Gilmanton. He mentioned Boston, and Whit said he'd been there. "Bigger 'n Portsmouth," Hackett advised him, "b they ain't so highborn to Boston, I mean the rich people ain't

Whit said he didn't know. He'd never been to Portsmout for that matter, either.

"No, nor I ain't," Hackett confessed. "But I seen Govern John times when he was to Wolfeboro. They don't come a higherborn 'n what he is, I guess."

"They say he's a good man."

"That's what I always thought. I guess you ain't heard abou him and them carpenters . . . ?"

"No, I don't know as I have."

"Well, the story I heard was: this Britainer general they go t to Boston—Gage his name is—he wanted some men to put up a place for his soldiers to sleep in. He couldn't get no body in Boston to do it because they don't like havin' the soldiers around So he sent word up to Governor John to send him some carpenters."

"Whyn't the soldiers do it themselves?"

"Well, I don't know. I guess they wan't up to it. Anyhow Governor knowed he couldn't get any carpenters to go down to Boston for that kind of work. So he hired 'em on without tellin' 'em nothin'. All they was told was 'twas carpenterwork. They didn't find out till they got clear to Boston. And *then* wan't they mad! I want to tell you! Why, right down here t' Rochester—you know where that is—they made Governor's Agent—he was the one done the hirin'—get down on his knees and apologize to the town."

"The agent, not Governor."

"No, hell, no. Not him! Governor wouldn't get down on his knees for the devil."

"I didn't think he would either," said Whit. "Still, he'd ought n't to 've tricked 'em."

"No, sir, you're right. That's what they thought."

"Man tricks his equals, is one thing; or in a trade is all right. But not them that are under him. He hadn't ought to do that."

"Specially when they're so many," Hez Hackett agreed. "Why, I take in Boston, where they can all get together, they're up to something 'bout half of the time. Same way to Exeter—same way to Rochester. Same way to Connecticut, I should expect."

"I shouldn't wonder. I never been there. Connecticut people, they say, has gone into the Grants."

"Oh, God A'mighty, I should say that they had. They're thick over there."

"How many provinces is there? Do you know?" Whit inquired

"I would say a good many."

"As many as ten?"

"I shouldn't wonder. Close to it, I guess Say, now that I think of it, you wouldn't like to trade for the knowledge of where there's a bee tree? I lined 'em to it back along in the summer, 'n marked the tree. But I been so busy I ain t been back to it since. I could tell you about it so's you could walk right up to it blindfolded. I wouldn't say it was a step over four mile. Whatever honey you get, you c'n pay me in meal for it."

"To balance?" said Whit.

"Well, I had hoped t' do better than that."

"Then you couldn't have figured to trade for it with me. How thick is the tree?"

"She ain't awful thick. You could get her down in an hour."

"She must a shrunk since I seen her, then"

Hackett said nothing.

"A whackin' old hemlock stump forty feet high?—a gray boulder beside it 'bout the size of this house?—twenty ... the bank of the big brook to the north of here?—ju... goes in t' that steep-sided place?"

Hackett said ruefully, "Twenty rod from wh..."

"The near bank, goin' up. And your bees is late-comers. I pitched a rock int' th' top of that stump a year ago in late Aug and never stirred up a bee. If they made ten pounds of honey the time they been in there, I would say they'd done well. If you want to take down that hemlock and bring me the honey, I'll trade you meal for it when I see what it's like."

"You talk like Beede."

"I been here five years."

Hackett laughed and stood up. He said he'd got to go. He turned to Melissa and said, "Ma'am, I want to thank you. That was an awful good feed And you got as handsome a baby as I ever see. I c'n tell all the rest of 'em. You got a name for it yet?"

"No," said Melissa.

Whit said to Hackett, "It's been dark for an hour. You better lay here"

—and after some slight discussion, Hackett stayed overnight. He slept out in the hay.

Whit said the next morning when Hackett had gone, "I liked him all right. But ain't he a terrible feller to talk!"

7 IT WAS the following April that David Philbrick was killed. A white pine tree fell on him. There had been three of them working—that is, two besides Philbrick. They were Elkanah Danforth, who wasn't more than sixteen, and Stephen Mason, an older man. Danforth and Mason were felling the tree—not such a big one, three feet at the butt—and Philbrick, near by, was lopping the limbs off another one that was already down. He wanted the limbs off so they could roll the trunk up to burn.

Mason and Danforth—both of them—called out to him two or three times that she was about ready to come—but he must have thought he was clear, because, though he answered, he kept right on working. They thought themselves he was clear but

ght's too close. They finally quit chopping: that would ain come out.

ank heard them quit chopping, and he called out, "All ... let me free this one—"

n a gust of wind came and they heard her crackling deep ... cut, and they yelled, "David, she's comin'!"

ooked up—and he saw the top of her beginning to move, e started out. They said he didn't look scared, and that he on to his ax. He came wading out through that whole mess ... ches, and they thought that most probably he'd make it ... But then he fell down. He went down sideways and onto his back, and they saw him throw up both arms to cover his face. Danforth screamed like a woman—

d the green tree settled over him.

y got to him in no time, but they couldn't do any good. A of the tree had gone right clear through his chest and as ... ten inches into the ground. He was dead when they saw ... was a limb maybe five inches through.

ey got him out and they tried to make him look better ... they went for his wife.

anah Danforth came out and told Whit of it. Elkanah ... pretty badly, and Whit said, "You stay right here and ... an eye on these young ones. I'll go in with my woman. I ... be gone long. If you're hungry, eat something. I ain't got ... rum."

Whit thought on the way, "It was prob'ly that knee of his give ... underneath him. That was why he fell down." But when he ... David, he didn't try to find out.

Mary Philbrick was quiet, and so was the younger girl who ... with her. The older girl wasn't there. As soon as they'd told ..., she'd gone off by herself.

Whit and Mason decided that they'd better wait till tomor... to bury him—and that they'd better send word out to Sand... ich in the meantime, as well. Mason said he would see to it

Whit went home for the night finally, and Melissa there. The reason Whit was so late leaving was bec thought he ought to have a look round for the older girl he went home. He found her in no time. She was out in th

He could just make her out—she was in a far and dark huddled over and crying, but not making a sound. He hand on her shoulder, and said, "I'm goin' t' set down o for a while"—and he went and sat down. After a tim stopped crying. Whit got up and went over to her He know what to do, and he didn't know what to say. Onc he laid his hand on her shoulder. "I'm goin' in 'n tell y that you're out here. You ain't got t' go i. right awa would pretty soon " She nodded her head. And Whit we He didn't feel that he'd helped any.

Daniel Beede himself came over from Sandwich, and three with him—Jonas Moore being one. They brought boards, knowing there'd be none in Tamworth.

Late that afternoon, David Philbrick was buried—at of a gray, granite boulder about a quarter of a mile fr house. Beede read from the Bible. They all were agreed was the one who should do it, although he favored the Q and they thought Philbrick had not. David, his wife th had been more of a Baptist. But she thanked Beede for it and he read quite a lot.

Afterwards, Beede went back as far as Mark Jewell's. stayed for one more night to help Mary Philbrick; and Jo planning to lie at Whit's for the night.

Jonathan Philbrick hadn't showed up. No one knew he was—somewhere off in the woods

Whit was glad it was Jonas if it had to be anyone, be didn't feel much like talking. He didn't want to think, eit

On their way home, Jonas talked along easily. He sa had told him to bring Philbrick's woman and both the two ones out to his house to stay. He had spoken to Mary Phi about it this noontime, but he wasn't certain that she'd

would go over again and see her in the morning. She
; on in Sandwich until they'd had the vendue—there
much to sell really except the place and the cow—and
.. .d, she'd go back to her people. "Although she
- married as easy as not, if she didn't go back there.
Philbrick would be the natural one—although she'd
' ' 1 before she could marry him. Still, women are
this part th' country. You know how old Dan'l got
Scribner t' come 'n live there with his family? Told her
re her the pick of his sons. She took the oldest one."
s had told him of this once before, but Whit didn't say
g, and Jonas went on. He tried a new topic. "They been
some fightin', I hear, down t' Boston."
re they?"
at's what I hear, and a good many killed."
t said, "Them two young ones of his, I am sorry for

guess so is most everyone. Still, she looked to me like a
earted woman."
, she is kindhearted, far as that goes."
oes quite a ways—if you got some sense to put with it."
es, I suppose so," said Whit. He made an effort: "Who was
in' to Boston?"
oldiers on one side—'n them that live round there. Bay
ony men. Soldiers marched out t' git aholt some powder the
a 'd got stored in—hold on now, they told me th' name th'
n. I guess I forgot it."
They git it?"
The soldiers? No, sir, they did not. Not so much as a grain.
y got more lead than powder. This place that I speak of
ere the powder was stored—wait now, it's got kind of a queer-
nding name. You know the names of any towns around
ston?"
"No."
"I wished I could remember it. I c'n re
od."

Whit said nothing at all.

"Twenty mile, or close to it," Jonas said resolutely, "this is from Boston that I can't think of its name. The whol back to Boston, the fellers lived round there shot at them. was at it all day. I don't know how many there was of soldiers, I mean—but there must a been a good many sta any got back. Either that, or to Bay Colony there can't shoot."

They had come along the path now till they were alm sight of Whit's house. Whit—as he always did here—was dering how his children had fared. There was a young girl who'd come over to tend them, but she didn't know muc wanted to see them . . .

This loosened the grip that his thoughts had had on him spoke now of David He said, "I think he was the most g man I ever see"

Jonathan Philbrick finally put in his appearance—n Whit's, at his brother's. He had a deer on his back—so h maintained—bigger than most men could carry. He gave half of it and then went away

8 THEY CAME to a morning that was the middle of Ma and there was still no word from Jonas. This was the day W was going to Sandwich to fetch in the oxen he had agreed w Daniel Beede to buy. He told Melissa that he'd go down and Jonas and find out how things stood.

Melissa said, "You'd better go down to Jonas's before y stop at Beede's. Once you get your hands on them oxen, y won't want to leave."

"You wait till you see 'em I tell you they're pretty."

"Are they, Whit? Really?"

"Oh, my gorry, yes! And yet as I said before, y

oxen—" he was all ready to go; he'd even said good-by to children—"with oxen, it ain't how they look, it's more how they broke in. I never see oxen work as pretty as these two. working right together; they step alike, too. You gee 'em or haw 'em, 'n they turn like one beast. When they go up int' th' woods, the don't seesaw a handsbreadth! And I want t' tell you them fellers can pull."

"You ain't got to sell 'em t' me, Whit"

"Just want you t' know. You'll see 'em tonight, I guess"

"Well, I hope that I will. Don't forget to go down to Jonas's."

Whit said he wouldn't forget. He told the dog to stay home, set off through his clearing and into the woods He was not taking his gun.

Spring was ten days ahead of time. There was no snow at all anywhere in the woods, and where the sun could get at it—like there in the clearing—the cold and the wetness had gone out of the ground. The trees hadn't begun to leaf out, so he could see as well as in winter. And the flies hadn't come yet. It was a fine time of year. But Bearcamp River was cold'—it was so cold that it made his legs ache as though he'd been knocked on the knee with a billet of wood.

He kept clear of Beede's, knowing Melissa was right—probably more so than she thought—by going around the north side of the pond, and went on down to Jonas's Jonas was there—he was making a garden. And Mrs Moore was there, too If she hadn't been there, Jonas wouldn't have been at the garden, because there was a haze in the air and an east wind coming up, and Jonas should have been fishing

Jonas said to Whit, yes, that he'd been to Fryeburg. But that he hadn't found anyone there that he thought would be likely to ... He was going to keep it in mind, though, and have another look round—if he ever got through with this garden. He asked if Jonathan Philbrick had shown up as yet. And Whit told of the deer.

"I wished she'd come and stay here," Ida Moore said ... much . . both men were uncomfortable. ...

that they were and went on, "There's twenty men, anyho
Sandwich ain't married, and that ain't as wild as what he
she was to stay here with us she could see the whole lot
come by this mornin', one at a time, t' get Jonas t' fish wid
Didn't they, Jonas?"

"Yes," Jonas said sadly. "But they won't come again."

Whit only stayed a few minutes, and then went back
Beede's. He wanted his oxen, he wanted to know they we

Beede had noticed that Whit didn't have his gun with
and as Whit was leaving the yard at the head of the near o
goad carried forward and his face very solemn, Beede s
him, "Now you look like a farmer."

Crossing the river was the only place that had worried
and when both of the oxen had humped themselves safe
the far bank and had settled again to their walking, W
mind was at peace. The near one was named Beauty, and
off one was named Neb. By Beede's chain Beauty had gi
feet and a half, and Neb wasn't less than that by much more
an inch. Beauty was piebald and his eyes didn't quite match
as Beede had said, " 'Taint often you'll see both his eyes the
time." Neb was almost all black with a white blaze on his
Whit had told Melissa that if she was real set on it, she c
change the names of them. He liked the names that they
on them now.

Having the oxen would give him a new feeling about a w
lot of the work on the place. He could command the stren
now that he needed to tackle most anything. There were a g
many things that for years he had had to pass by, knowing t
were too much for him. Near the east end of his field, there
a fair-sized granite boulder. It was too small to leave there
have it look right, but it had been too big to get rid of in
time that was worth. That boulder had mocked him. But now
had the victory: he had the strength.

'' fence his field round with stumps. He could free it
' I' '1 plow it deep now—and he'd get a great crop.
wintertime came he could haul wood and logs. When
' wanted the work of his pair, he would lend them out
!! on he'd be paid. But no man would drive
excepting himself—although it wouldn't be long now
..e'd be teaching the boy . . .

was the spring. Everything was beginning.

'-had told him how over west in the Grants, Ethan Allen
captured the great fort on the lake—Fort Ticonderoga.
'' Beede, was a great one to swagger and swear. He'd
'he fort by surprise, and then with the danger all past and
hurt, Allen had spread his legs wide and stuck his thumbs
' ' and roared out to the general who was in charge of
., "Now, then, you God damn old rat, you come on out of
It had made Allen comic—or so Beede had thought.

' ' ' said he supposed it was more or less the same kind
'ness that Jonas Moore had told of. some fighting down
and Boston?

And Beede'd said, yes—it was all the same thing.

Beede would have been more than willing to talk a lot more
it, but Whit hadn't wanted to—any more than he wanted to
ik of it now. It was a puzzling business. He didn't at all un-
stand it—and although that rather attracted him, still he
nted more to think of his work.

He wished David Philbrick were coming over tomorrow to
by the oxen with him. David and he had talked often of oxen.
ld as much as a hundred times—easily!—he'd said to David,
David to him, "If we had a pair of oxen here now—"
David himself had been a man of great strength—except for
at knee of his. That could mean, of course, that there was some
w in the goodness of strength, and that he, Whit, ought to
atch out for it. But it was bad luck had killed David. Bad luc'
ould beat anything David had known that. Everyone did.
Whit watched the steady, slow beat of their wall' ~

were coming across the pine plain now where the going smooth . . . their heads nodding and swaying . . . and little wrinkles would come and go on their shoulders.

Whit walked beside them, not often urging them or gu them. It was flat here and no trouble to get through the tre

9 DURING THE first month that Whit had the oxen families moved into the town. It seemed, in a way, as thoug oxen had brought them.

Three of the men had bought land near to each other interval the other side of the hill a mile to the south of W place. It was Dutiful Jackman who told Whit about them just come by there. They had been there three days, so Jac told Whit, and he didn't appear to approve of them. He silence what Melissa set out for him, and she guessed th new people hadn't asked him to eat. But when he had fin neither Melissa nor Whit could quite bring themselves to point of suggesting he stay. Jackman thanked them as sta he always did . . . and took the path toward the Philbricks'.

Whit, watching him go, said to Melissa, "You don't sup that he figures to *speak* to her?"

"No!" She was scrubbing with sand the plate that Jack had used.

"Well, now, I d' know. They say any man c'n get married."

"*But they don't say to who.*"

"He looked to me a little cleaner than usual. I shouldn't w der but that might be it. I never thought nothin' would m Dutiful wash! When was he here last?"

"Four months ago."

"He has washed in the meantime."

"Not more than once."

"Well, maybe not."

"He smells worse'n ever." She took her broom from the corn and began to sweep round the hearth.

It was well on in the evening. The sun had gone down. Over the corner at one end of the cabin, both of the children were soundly asleep Dutiful Jackman's diffident tones hadn't disturbed them. Nor had they wakened when Jen had barked at him.

Whit sat down in the doorway. "I hope he does speak to her. I really do."

"Why?"

"Because she'd have to laugh. She couldn't help herself—nobody could."

"She woudn't laugh," said Melissa.

"She'd not take it serious!" Whit said, turning his head to look at her.

"No, I don't mean that." She'd finished sweeping the hearth and, putting her broom back, took up the flat wooden shovel to cover the fire.

Whit waited. The mosquitoes weren't bad tonight compared to what they had been . . .

"Married to Philbrick," Melissa explained, "she felt pretty safe, didn't she?"

"Why, I d' know; maybe."

"Well, she did, anyhow, because anyone would Then to come down from that—and as sudden as she did—to the place where Jackman could speak to her—no, I don't think that she'd laugh."

Whit sat in silence a moment Then he said, "I wish she'd perk up. They had some bad luck—her and David did both. But it ain't as though there was somethin' for her t' be ashamed of."

"Give her time," said Melissa "It ain't but two months."

"Oftentimes they are married a lot sooner than that. But she don't show no *signs* of it"

"You don't begrudge her the meat, do you?"

"No, not a mite. But she can't stay there this winter without any man. And I got t' make the house bigger if she comes over here."

"She ain't asked t' come yet."

"She ain't *got* t' ask! She ain't any family: what el

do? She ain't got t' say *nothin'!* You 'n I 'n her know that if t' look out for her 'twould be handier here. There'd be only fire, and it ain't an awful lot harder t' cook for seven than And then if she was right here, why, she could help you out. Them things are so true they don't have t' be said. But it al true we'd sooner be by ourselves."

"Nor that ain't got t' be said t' her either, I guess."

"No, I guess not. But what can she do? There's them two li girls."

"How about Jonas Moore?"

"They don't seem so anxious as what they did before."

"That ain't like Ida Moore. She ain't one t' go back on an of t' help."

"Yes, I know that. Well . . . it ain't winter yet."

"No," said Melissa. She was getting ready their bed.

There was dusk in the clearing, and away off in the woods whippoorwill sounded. Whit said, "I ain't heard an owl for as three or four days. I wonder where they have gone to

lissa said she didn't know.

r reckoned the day lately?"

, not the day. But I know it's the fourth week in June

I thought it was, prob'ly. It looks like it round."

Melissa was thinking that the bed needed new cornhusks.

Whit's voice was gentle and quiet. "Takes a long time to g dark, don't it?—this time in the year."

"Yes."

10

HE WENT over the next night to see the new pe who'd located over the hill. Melissa wanted to go but she ha stay home with the children. Whit said he'd be back fore very long.

He was back in two hours. She questioned him e

"Look all right to me," he said, coming up towar

"Children asleep?"

"They're quiet, at least. What are the women like?"

"Well, I couldn't say. There's quite a mess of 'em, though. Must e as many as four or five, I should think. They didn't talk any."

"Did—did they have on bonnets?"

"I didn't notice, t' tell you the truth. There are six men that e grown between the three families; they got a brave pair of ken, and there's quite a good many boys."

"Ain't they got any girls?"

"Oh, yes. And I want t' tell you that they made a good start! hey got one house about roofed, and a garden all dug, and they en got some hay up in stacks from off that little meadow that ere is over there. I guess you never seen it. I didn't ask what ey paid for the land I guess a good deal, though. Them oxen ere right up in shape"

"Where did they come from?"

"They hauled in their goods with 'em."

"The people, I mean."

"Rochester people" He hung up his hat. "They come up the almon Falls River to East Pond and lay there the first night, nd they lay the next night at the south end of Great Ossipy. Then they come in from there. They could do it, all right."

"Rochester," she said. "That's where they had the great fire."

"Ayuh Twenty mile, more or less, up from Portsmouth it is. They had news about Portsmouth. Been a high old time there."

"Always is, ain't they? I used to hear."

"You never heard nothin' like this one before. I ain't sure really that I got it straight now"

"What happened?"

"Well, the way they told me—" He went over to peer down at the children, and seeing young Jonas still about a quarter awake, he caressed the boy's head and saw him wriggle in comfort and settle nearer to sleep. Whit watched him a moment, a and then without saying a word went outside and sat the bench with his back to the wall, his chin on his legs stretched out in front of him. Up over witch-hazel pole, resting on pegs where

Melissa sat down in the doorway, the light from the west ing over her shoulder. "Most Portsmouth stories," she "you'd ought t' be sure they're asleep."

"Oh, it ain't so bad as that, really—at least not in a way.

"What is it?"

"Well, as near as I could make out: some feller I don't k his name that Governor had put into General Court—that is wan't sent by no town same as the rest of 'em be—well, didn't like that, so they took and voted him out. So he w round to a tavern,—I guess they all of 'em did. And he begun talk loud and to say what he thought. So I guess some of went for him. Well, he ducked 'n got out, and he made Governor's house, 'n he went in there 'n hid.

"That made 'em mad. If he'd stood up to 'em in the first pla they might a backed down. Or if he'd kep' a runnin', they'd quit 'n come back for more drink. But when he *hid behi* Governor, that made 'em mad. I shouldn't wonder but what 'd Governor, too. He ain't that kind—or at least he didn't use once. *Anyhow, they hauled a great cannon up in front* 'n they said if this feller didn't come out, that they'd touc off. So then he come out. I don't know whether Governo him or not. Still it may be that he's softened up some. I don like to think it."

"What did they do with the one that come out?" aske Melissa.

"I don't know. Governor, he took his people and went off t some fort. And he'd no sooner gone than they broke into hi house, and stove it all up, and took about everything they coul lug off. *Ain't that a fine business?" He spat on the ground.*

"Portsmouth people?" she said.

"I don't know who else."

"But—well, I always had an idea they was rich people Portsmouth."

"Yes, a good many's rich. But th' town ain't all Wentworths They got sailors and whores and speechmakers, too"

..ly, "They been fightin' t' Boston again. I guess worse 'n .. A proper battle, this was—same as 'twould be in a war."

"Who between?" asked Melissa.

"Britainer soldiers 'n m'litia, they say."

"M'litia? Like—like the same as t' Kettleford?"

"Bay Colony men, I guess, mostly they was. They ain't the ..e as nobody"

"Who won?"

"Soldiers, I guess. They was on top at the finish. But th' wan't ..many of 'em as th' was t' begin. M'litia done well. They kill't ..re 'n you'd think for."

"Right in Boston?" she said.

"Handy to it, I guess. 'Twas up on a hill. Wait now—Breed's ..ll"

She was troubled and puzzled. She shook her head. . .

Finally Whit said, "You know there's one of them fellers that ..really took to. I got to thinkin' about it comin' over th' hill He ..n't married or nothin'. He might be just the one."

"For Mary Philbrick, you mean?"

"Ayuh."

"How is he featured?"

"'Bout th' same as the rest. He ain't much to look at. But h.. can dovetail as good as what Jonas Moore can I see where h.. done it."

"What's his name?"

"I forget now. He only said once"

"What 'd th' rest of 'em call him?"

"Well, 'him,' like, or 'you,' 'n nod their head or look at him. You know how it is He didn't talk much. I guess except for his name, he didn't speak only once. But you c'n tell to look at him he's a great one to work."

"How old did he look?"

"Why, I couldn't say, really . . . 'bout th' same as most men."

"But you do know he can dovetail."

"Yes, sir, he can!"

"I'll tell Mary tomorrow," Melissa said grimly. "I don't see there's anything more she could ask. Still, he don't own a rif does he?—just to make it complete?"

"No," said Whit blandly.

"What did he say?—the one time that he spoke."

"He asked me," said Whit, "if I liked to ketch trouts."

The name Whit had missed turned out to be Onesiphorus.

They saw him off and on during the summer—maybe th or four times. He spoke his name "Phorus"; it was his broth told Whit what the whole of it was Whit took him fishing af they'd been there a month. They got a sackful. On their w home, they stopped by at Mary Philbrick's to leave some them there.

She gave them spruce beer or syrup whichever they cho and she was glad of the trout. But Whit didn't think that s really laid herself out to make an impression on Phorus as mu as she might. Although, he admitted, she was cheerful enoug

"How're they off for meat?" Melissa inquired.

"He'd been there again, I guess. They got enough."

"That makes the third time he's been there in a month."

"Does it?"

"Maybe he ain't quite so wild as you think."

"Oh, he's wild enough, surely She ain't goin' t' tame him!

11 WHIT WAS pounding dried corn on a fair day in Sep tember when he saw that someone was standing in the door o the shed: it was Mark Jewell, Jr. He had no gun with him, so h couldn't have happened by hunting; he seemed easy and natura so he wasn't bringing bad news, Whit couldn't imagine what hi errand could be.

Mark Jewell, Jr. lived on the hill over in the western part o the town near the border of Sandwich. He was a sober, slow man, very careful and accurate. In that, he resembled his father who was next to Beede in Sandwich. Young Mark was so careful

but, although he'd had his place now for three or four years, he hadn't yet brought a wife to it. Everyone knew that he planned to marry Ruth Vittum as soon as he thought he was ready. She, in the meantime, appeared willing to wait—or it may have been she knew no one could hurry Mark Jewell.

Whit was sure *he* wasn't going to . . .

"A dry day," Mark said finally, "is the best to pound Indian."

"Cracks better, yes. But it takes a long time any day. We'd ought t' have a mill handier. With a mill and a smith, we'd be right up in shape in this town."

"Moulton promised a smith when I took up my land."

"I'd expect one a lot sooner if he hadn't promised."

"You 'n Beede, I guess, feel the same way about him."

Whit leaned on his pestle. "Dan'l Beede," he said, "is a proper surveyor. He run out Sandwich in 1769. Now Jonathan Moulton comes along six years later and claims Beede was wrong and wants part of the land. There ain't no man on earth can get so upset 's a surveyor when you try t' tell him he has made a mistake—specially if the surveyor is Beede and you're Jonathan Moulton."

"I guess maybe you're right," Jewell agreed. "Tell you the business I come on. I been countin' the town."

"You been what?"

"Countin' how many people there is in the town. They're at it everywheres—all of the towns."

Whit didn't quite like it. "They never done it before."

"Well, they're hard at it now, anyhow. Sandwich is finished. 'Tain't the Proprietors doin' it. *It's Gen'ral Court.*"

"Oh. Well, you didn't need to come way over here to find out there was four of us—that is, if you count the two young ones. Not that I ain't glad to see you, of course."

"They count," said Jewell. He had a book with him and he wrote it down. "Two ain't so many, though."

"How many you got?"

"Another question," said Jewell: "do you own a gu

"I own a rifle."

"*The kind of berril don't matter—not* so long as she'll fire."

There was an uncomfortable pause. "She'll fire," said Whit.

Jewell hadn't looked up. "In Sandwich," he said, "in the whole of the town, there is two hundred and forty-three people. Joshua Prescott and my father signed it. There is forty-six men who can vote, and more 'n half of them have got guns."

"Not in Tamworth," Whit told him. "They ain't half of 'em guns,—and half of the guns that they have got wouldn't shoot a hole in a snowbank. Some of them that own guns are too poor to buy powder, and them that have powder don't know how to shoot. Sandwich has two hundred and forty-three people. Well, I expect Tamworth's a hundred and fifty. And out of that hundred and fifty, there is only one man that a sensible deer would try to run away from. That is Hez Hackett."

"Dutiful Jackman—they say he can shoot."

"I never been out with him. What do they want to ask about guns for?—I mean, whoever it is that's payin' you t' go round?"

Jewell said honestly that he didn't know.

"They figure the Indians are comin' back, do they?"

"I hadn't heard of it."

"Neither have I. You wouldn't think, would you, that they was goin' t' put a tax on 'em?"

"I shouldn't think it," said Jewell. And then he suggested, "If there was a war goin' on, I suppose they'd want to know."

"There ain't any war in New Hampshire. They ain't even been fightin' to Boston since away back in June."

Mark Jewell, Jr. said he must go. He was trying to put his book in his pocket—it didn't fit very well. "Elkanah Danforth," he said, "has joined up with the army. He went off the day before yesterday. He is the only one out of the town."

"Elkanah has gone? There, now, I didn't know that." Whit came to the front of the shed.

"I guess bein' a soldier ought t' suit him pretty good." Jewell tried turning the book upside down. "They tell me he was drunk a month steady before he went away. Claimed the only way he could get it out of his head, seein' David Philbrick get killed,

to get full of rum." He fussed some with the book, and ly got it all tucked away . . .

How old is Elkanah?"

Sixteen, I should think. Well, I got to go now. Stop by to my e when you're handy to it sometime."

Whit smiled—but not brightly. And Jewell went on his way.

ary was married to Jonathan Philbrick—tamed or untamed metime in that fall. There was nothing sudden about it. He got in her grain for her, and in fact all through the late sum- he'd been around the place there a good part of the time. hit was relieved, of course, that she'd married someone— ugh he didn't like it that she'd married Jonathan after his ng Melissa that he was certain she'd not.

e said to Melissa, "You know, I'm glad he hooked on to her: p to him now. He c'n pull his load, 'n I c'n pull mine. I ld have helped her, I owed it to David. But I won't pretend when I'm luggin' in wood, it ain't lighter to carry if it's nt t' keep you warm—you and the children—than what it ld be if it was for somebody else. That may be selfish. I hope t it ain't."

"No . . ." said Melissa.

"You don't sound awful sart'n. Well, maybe it is. But it's tural, too. I don't think I could change it. M'lissa, you couldn't pect that to work for another man's family would feel the same a man as to work for his own?"

"No, I know that. Are they Jonathan's family?"

"Well, they are now. At least they're all that he's got."

"But they're not his own And they ain't rightly hern, either —only through David, and now he is gone Them two little girls, feel sorry for them."

"He'll look out for them."

"I don't doubt he will—well as he can."

Whit said, "She's been their stepmother. She still is ..."

"Yes," Melissa admitted. But without pausing long lder one, Whit. I feel sorry for her."

Whit said nothing at all. He simply got up and went out of the house.

12 THAT WAS the month that the British burned Falmouth—seventy miles to the east from Whit's place.

Falmouth didn't all burn, but it burned pretty well. They were British from Boston who had sailed up the coast. Going and coming, they went right by Portsmouth. A good many Portsmouth people thought that they might be next—seeing Governor John wasn't there any more because they had succeeded in driving him out. They loaded their things into carts and went back into the country—away from the seacoast, where they would be safe. But they didn't go any seventy miles. They were just being careful—they weren't out of their wits. None of them went up to Tamworth.

Between Tamworth and Falmouth there was nothing but woods. There were no rivers to follow; they ran more to the south. No one in Tamworth had ever seen Falmouth. "McGowan," Melissa said, "didn't he come from there?"

"Yes, now that I think of it, I guess maybe he did. Still, it must a been quite a long time ago."

Whit couldn't help thinking of that young one of David's. He couldn't help seeing her as she'd been that day in the barn, huddled over and shaken from time to time with her sobs. And then slowly grown quiet . . .

He knew that all summer she had been much by herself. She was the one who did most of the berrying, and who went looking for herbs. Any task, Mary had said to Melissa, that would take her away from the house, the girl would try to get for her share.

Whit came on her one day by the side of a brook. She hadn't heard him because of the noise of the water. Her face, so

...looked a good deal more cheerful than it had any time ...r father had died.

...called out to her—

...d she didn't turn round, she froze perfectly still, the same ...bit will do.

...spoke again. When she knew who he was, she looked up· ...s easier

...talked of the brook for a while—where it rose, and so ...d finally Whit, knowing now that he must for the sake ...onscience, said, "How do you 'n your uncle get on?"

...right," she said. The way that she said it made it per... ...plain. He knew, and she knew, that that was just about it.

...t's good," he said. "And while I think of it, any time you ...eeling you'd like t' go somewheres for a visit, you're to ...ver t' my place. All you got t' do is show up, 'n I'll go talk ...ma. You understand, do you?"

..., yes," she said. "Thank you."

...u ain't got t' say nothin' t' nobody All you got t' do is t' ...I guess you know the path."

..., yes." She nodded. And looking up at him, "You think ...ess would like it?"

...rt'n!" he answered. "No question at all!"

...e girl nodded gravely.

...hat's between you and me, then."

...ke a secret."

...Vell, yes, in a way."

...know about secrets. I used to have em with Pa He never ...nobody. Neither did I."

...No, I guess you didn't," said Whit "You know, you favor ...pa."

...Do I?"

...Oh, yes."

...he said to Whit suddenly, "Do you think he'll ever come ...k?"

"Well—how do you mean?"

"I mean in the night. Come and talk to me—sit on the si the bed. I wish he would."

"I have heard of it happenin'," he said, "but I don't you'd ought to count on it. My mother never come back, th I hoped that she would. I used to dream of her—I still do times. But she never come back in just the way that you m

"Were you bigger than me when she—when she died?"

"No, about the same size. P'raps a little more heft, bu any more old."

"How did she come back?"

"Only that I remember her. It ain't the same that you But when you get older, it will seem the natural thing."

"I never saw him to tell him good-by." But still her ten gone, and her bitterness, too. Whit looked down at her fa thin little face, and her hair bleached by the sun. Her eyes light blue as her father's had been.

"You will see him again."

"Oh, yes, I expect so. Prob'ly will when I die. Well, I g better go home now I been gone a long while. Good by scrambled up onto her feet and went running off throug woods on a line for the house.

Whit stood there and listened—until he knew that the of her feet in the leaves was no longer heard.

Then he went slowly home through the October woods.

Melissa thought he was more cheerful that evening tha had been for some time.

13 WHIT SAID to the Moores one day in December wh he'd gone over to Sandwich to bring home a grindstone, "I wi you'd come 'n visit. I have built on t' th' house. There would even Jonas 'n me have to lay out in th' barn."

"At the end, or the back you built?" Jonas inquired.

"Back."

get th' good of the chimbley, then. Still cold, ain't it,
g?"
ce."
es, I want t' go!"
ell—" he said, "I d' know."
ee ain't got t' lay out in th' back, even," Whit said to
"you c'n lay any place that you like—within reason, that
I'll let the two youngsters lay out in th' back. They c'n snug
the chimbley 'n be warm 'n asleep—while you set up in
th' fire 'n sing 'n tell lies—'n I have to listen. When do you
to come?"

ebruary," said Jonas. And Ida Moore added, "You c'n look
the first good day that we get!"

was the third week in the month before there came a day
Whit and Melissa agreed that this was probably it. There
good snow for traveling and a fair day overhead and the
hadn't set when Jonas and Ida Moore kicked off their snow-
s in front of Whit's door.

Jen made quite a fuss over Jonas—they didn't know why
ord not come—and Whit's welcome, though quieter, was
as sincere. Melissa, who'd not seen Ida Moore in a good
y months, could say nothing.

oung Jonas stayed clear of it. He stood in the doorway, with
small brother behind him, and as long as no one moved to-
d them, they were content to stand there and watch.

Whit called to the youngsters, "Jonas, Gowan, come out
e—" and they disappeared into the shadows like small trout
n a pool.

Whit was put out, and he was disappointed as well; he was
d of both boys, and he wanted to show them both off. "Gen-
lly," he said—and he spoke half to himself, "when I call, they
me runnin',—that is, if they ain't busy with nothin' else
e time."

"Shy, I guess, ain't they?" Jonas Moore said offh

couldn't see that it mattered. He'd never seen a child yet didn't hang in the doorway and disappear when you spoke

"Maybe," Whit said.

Jonas took a few steps to his left and looked out in the "Who done the dovetailin'? Looks pretty good."

"Phorus Mason," said Whit.

"He done all right,—for a Rochester man."

The women moved in through the door, and Whit foll them in. But the two boys had retreated and were nowhe be seen.

Jonas came in and took off his load, and then he and went out to the barn.

Melissa commenced fixing supper, and Ida M she had come eighteen miles—and two small, silent showed in the door of the new room at the back Ida pr that she didn't see them, but the boys knew that she sa and their mother knew, too.

Ida Moore and Melissa kept on with their talking T little boys, grinning and silent, and their eyes very bright farther and farther into the light of the room. Young Jo dressed just the same as his father, in breeches and shi his hair was long enough now to be clubbed in the back. be six in the spring. He was featured like Whit, but didn't look like him—perhaps because the boy at the ce was just ready to laugh. Ida Moore hoped that he'd that. But there was that in his face that made it unlikely looked as though he would always take things kind of hard though he'd feel them, at any rate. That was like Whit he could pick out a worse person to be like than Whit

Gowan was the one that she wanted to get h was stubby and square and he had the soft ha and he was bursting with excitement, and crumbs of johnnycake stuck on his face. . .

Old Jen had been watching them and thump

floor.

e miss Major like anything," Ida Moore said.
l young Jonas laughed loudly, and so Gowan did, too.

it hadn't one barn, but several: a row of log buildings, each to the next, but none of them bigger than three men put up. The roofs were no higher than he had thought l, and were made of bark slabs held in place by long poles cks. There were no windows for the cold to come in. The were unfloored and dark and they were hard to clean out. ey sheltered his cattle—and they'd been built with few ors and without any boards.

is began with the oxen. He saw that they'd put on weight he said that they had. And Whit said that they'd ought to 'n oats every day. There was a cut on Neb's knee that asked Jonas to look at. The knee was a little mite swollen. e cut had come from a rock hidden under the snow, and going over the leg carefully from shoulder to hoof, Jonas at he thought the swelling probably came from the bruise. avor it, does he?"

o more 'n you'd think."

e will," Jonas said, "even after it's well That cut ain't goin' e trouble, or it would have by now"

has noted that Beauty was almost blind in one eye. He said ng about that, and neither did Whit.

l the rest of the cattle Jonas saw just as carefully. He exed the hay and the grains and the Indian corn. He didn't anything. . . .

it when they had finished, they came back to the oxen. s sat down on the sill in the doorway, picked up a chip and n scraping his moccasin Whit rested his elbows across aty's back. He and Jonas were comfortable here. They would nto the house when Melissa called to them. . . .

Your p'tatis," said Jonas, "don't run awful big."

And few to the hill. And yet I worked on 'em. I don't k .

it it was. Yourn do any better?"

"Some. Not a gre' deal. Her garden done well."

"Good."

Whit scratched Beauty's ear, but the ox pulled away.

"You take twenty years ago," Jonas said very casually, you wouldn't have dared to have all of this here. Wouldn Indians have loved t' get into this! They'd shoot both the and set fire t' the house, 'n prob'ly run off your woman 'n yo sters to sell—although the littlest one, prob'ly, bein' short le t' travel, they'd whack his head on a rock and throw him to side—and prob'ly you'd a been fool enough t' try t' stand 'em, and so you'd be face down in the ashes without any your head. Wouldn't that have been pretty! But a man s now, he c'n afford t' do like you're doin'. What I mean t' s take 'n build up a place." Under his eyebrows, he glanced o Whit—and then down at what he was doing. "You know you're safe."

Whit didn't even look at him. "You c'n have fire," he "without Indians. You c'n have fire with wind and with sp You don't need Indians t' take off your children The croup the fever can do that just as good It wan't any Indians that k David Philbrick; I don't s'pose 'twas an Indian that went with his wife—his first one, that's dead, I mean"

"Feller named Duffy," Jonas supplied

Whit hadn't heard him. "I ain't a fool," he said. "I ain't b showin' you things that I own. I been tryin' t' show you w I'm tryin' t' do—part you can see, anyhow."

Jonas spat very carefully. "I c'n see pretty good."

"You said that I thought that t' winnow ten bushel of rye the same thing as knowin' who'd be here t' eat it."

"Well, maybe I did, then. But I take it back."

"What's the news out t' Sandwich?"

"Hell, there ain't any. Mark Jewell got married."

"To a woman too good for him."

"You're a great one to talk!"

"I asked you for news."

"All right, then: they got some new kind of State Govern-
—what the hell ever that is, 'n I don't know as I care. Oh,
there is news. Arnold and them fellers tried for Quebec is
home again now. That is, them that are comin'; I guess
a few will have to stay there. That one didn't turn out so
."

"'Twan't the fault of the rifles."

"Oh, no, I know that! Well, now let me see . . . in the counting
ndwich—the signing, I mean—thirty-eight favored fightin'
ght that said no. 'Test Act,' they call it. It don't mean a
. Take the Weeds: they are Quakers so they can't say that
l fight. But I never see a Weed that would thank you to spit
eye. As for the thirty-eight others, they all of 'em signed.
shouldn't they sign it? It don't mean anything A thing like
in't a promise. In order to promise, you got to have some-
o promise to—not just a paper. I signed it myself."

"es, so did I."

"ut if I don't want t' fight, there can't nobody make me. I
care what I signed. If I do want t' fight, they got t' fight me
me."

"ost of the rest of 'em feel the same way?"

couldn't say. Biggest part of 'em, prob'ly, don't give a
." He turned to spit out the doorway "You been huntin'
lately? Jen don't look t' me as if you'd pushed her too
"

"don't know as I have."

nas was frowning as he gazed toward the woods "Who in
ell is that comin'? I got the sun in my eye"

hit came over beside him . but he couldn't tell, either.

nas commented, "Don't walk very spry."

hit shook his head in agreement. "He ain't carryin' nothin',
can't have come far. Still, from the shape of him, he don't
round here. Sun's right square in back of him so I can't
ace."

'hat's what I said."

'hit ' over Jonas and out into the b

the man would see where he was. Then he stood there waited....

Whit didn't know who it was until he'd come in throug gate—leaving the bar down. It was Elkanah Danforth.

Jonas stayed in his place in the doorway—the boy was loo for Whit, he wasn't looking for him.

Whit went forward to meet him. "I didn't know you'd back from the army."

Elkanah was skin and bones mostly. He was dirty and and his face was all broken out. He had enough clothing even had spatterdashes—but he didn't look warm.

Whit said, "Elkanah, come in t' th' house."

"I come over t' see if you had any work."

"Come in t' th' barn."

But Elkanah stood still. There was no life in his face.

"Well, right now, Elkanah, there ain't a great deal. Cho wood's about all. I ain't buildin' nothin'. What did you ha mind?"

The boy shrugged his shoulders. "You ain't got then...?"

"No, Elkanah, I hain't."

Elkanah nodded.

"But come in 'n set down, won't ye? There ain't nobody h only Jonas 'n me."

"No, I'm goin' back." He turned and went out through barnyard and down the hill toward the woods.

Whit crossed the yard slowly and put the bar up again. Th he went back into the barn. There didn't seem to be much to s

Melissa called to them, and they went toward the house.

It was blue-gray and cold as they went toward the house. T sun had set now and the sharp shadows had gone.

Whit saw that young Jonas stood in the doorway awaitu them. He said to the boy, "Where you been all this time?"

Young Jonas grinned. "Nowheres," he said. Then he a nounced, "She can whistle."

"Who can?"

[illegible] woman."

"You know Mrs. Moore."

[illegible] Jonas nodded. "Pa, you come 'n listen."

"All right."

[illegible] Moore asked, "I c'n come, too?"

[illegible]," the boy answered and ran into the house.

ALTHOUGH THE snow would stay in the woods for [illegible]er two weeks probably, it was gone from the fields before [illegible] was out. Whit was uneasy and restless; he wanted to plow. [illegible] shortness of summer was in his thoughts all the time. The [illegible] never held off in August because they'd had a late spring. [illegible]tched up the oxen before the ground had dried out enough [illegible]hen the buds on the red oaks were still fuzzy and furled— the mud stuck to the plowshare and he couldn't free it. This on the high ground up back of the house. Down in what he called the clearing, down in front of the house, with the [illegible] brook running through it—the first place that he'd cleared [illegible]ere were great patches of water.

[illegible] he had to wait.

[illegible]e didn't take to it kindly. He was short with the children; [illegible]as moody all day, and at night he couldn't lie quiet. Melissa [illegible]ed that he'd go on an errand that would take him two or [illegible] days. She asked him one morning why he didn't go trout-[illegible] she thought that might help.

[illegible]e said, "Brooks 're too high,"—and didn't speak again until [illegible].

[illegible]e was so tight-strung and nervous that Melissa thought to [illegible]elf that if he was to stub his toe good and hard maybe, or [illegible] his shin on the fire bench when he had his arms full of [illegible]d—well, it might be a good thing. It might clear the air, [illegible]be. But she knew this wouldn't happen: he wasn't the kind [illegible] ang his shin on the bench. . . .

[illegible]hit watched the snow patches dwindle high up [illegible] [illegible]ntain; he saw the water gone off from down [illegible]

field; the sound of the brook wasn't so loud as it had l and the winter they'd passed began to fade and grow dim. same time the next winter began to lose some of its The space in between them was here and at hand

The soil was now ready. He could start in to plow.

Neb and Beauty had grown in the two years that he' them. They had weight on them now in addition to And they knew how to use it.

It was hard plowing here on the high field. He had haul the stumps, but there were still some roots left, and unde surface, new rocks had worked up. But now that he was at felt pretty good. This was the field from which to get a vie the mountain. It was with him all day. And he rejoiced i oxen, and his oxen knew him. Beauty was used to being blin one eye; it didn't bother him any. They were all three of working to just the same purpose; they went well together they knew that they did. Whit could feel the same easy and lifting comfort in working with them that two or three years he had known in working with David. He liked to plow—bu made his arms ache.

He was using a new white-oak yoke that he'd fashioned winter, and it seemed to set well.

Stopping to rest at the end of a furrow, after making the r he leaned on the plow . . . and he counted the smoke from neighbors' houses—and wondered how many had started plow.

All day he was plowing, until evening had come. And then the dusk, he stumbled about at the chores.

Melissa wanted to laugh at him because he was so chang and so cheerful—and yet he didn't seem to realize how he'd be before. The only thing that he said that had to do with his fe ings was when, the chores finished, he came into the house. H said, "I feel as though now I'd got a holt on the season. I got h hooked, anyhow. I hope she don't get away."

She tried to get him to eat something, but he was too tired

He just lay down and slept, not stirring all night. He seemed to ...er like a boy.

It was that way for three weeks while he was plowing and harrowing, broadcasting, brush-harrowing, and dropping his ...ian corn. The leaves of the red oaks had unrolled and were ...en now, and the warm smell of the spring was on all of the ...d.

He didn't come in to his breakfast one morning, and she went ...t to look for him. He was nowhere about—and the chores ...re only half done—and when she came into the house and ...ked in the place where he kept his fishhooks and saw it was ...pty, she knew everything was all right.

He was back by midmorning with a sack half-full of trouts, ...d carrying one on a twig that looked as big as his arm . . . ...d it *was* as big as his forearm and about half of his hand.

He ate enough breakfast for two men.

She took his dinner out to him—because he'd said he wanted ... stay with the oxen or something like that—and she charged ...he two children not to go away from the house.

15

WHIT KEPT too busy through the fore part of the summer to kill his own meat, even But they suffered no lack. Jonathan Philbrick brought a quarter occasionally—for which he was paid. But it was Beauty and Neb brought in most of the meat—as well as other things, too such as labor in mowing time, a nice piece of leather, linen cloth and some findings, and cider, as well. They were a pair had a great reputation A man would pay more for a day of Whit's oxen than he would for any other pair in the town. He *could* afford to because he'd get more work. There were enough people wanted them to fill ... days a week. Whit had to plan out his time, though, ... couldn't spare a great deal of it from off his own p...

how much they'd pay. He had ten acres cleared, and althoug hay didn't need tending, two acres of Indian and one of pota were enough to look out for without very much else. Add acres of rye, a half acre each of oats and of wheat, the garde work, four cows night and morning, the pigs and her hens, the water to haul—and it wasn't so easy to find time to go

There were quite a few men who, the second week in when they heard that the Congress had voted for Independe and so on—Liberty and Freedom, and all that kind of thin *appeared to think it important. Over in Sandwich* there w good deal of treating—they even treated Dutiful Jackman, for once ran into luck: he just happened to be there.

Whit heard the news of how the Congress had voted w Hez Hackett brought it.

Hackett himself wasn't certain—that is, in his own mind whether it was quite as much of a thing as they'd made out Sandwich. Still, he didn't hold on to it, he didn't wait till they eaten, he sprung it right off—as they stood there in the fie where he'd come on Whit hilling young Indian corn. A Hackett added the comment, "Maybe we'll get somewhere now He'd heard another man say that.

Whit leaned on his hoe It was late afternoon. He'd been hi ..ng since dinnertime. *It was muggy and hot*, and they neede the rain from a thunderstorm that was making up now in th southwestern sky—but he didn't believe that they'd get it, would probably go round. And if it did come, it would come hard and sudden, flatten the corn, and perhaps wash out the hills So he leaned on his hoe, and the little pain between his shoulders and the tireless flies didn't make him feel too polite. He wiped some of the sweat off the back of his neck and his forehead, made a pass at the flies, and said to Hez Hackett, "Why?"

Hackett had known Whit for several years. He took no of fense at the tone—although he felt that it put on to defend what he'd said. "Why? Well, the way th we're onto a track. We know what we're after

...n wanderin' round in the woods—some of 'em hopin' t' ...p a deer, you might say, maybe, some of figurin' a couple ...ou would do. But now we know what we're after—'n we c'n ...g on till we get it. That is, we c'n hang on till we get it, or ...t."

"Independence, you mean."

"Independence," said Hackett.

"All right, Independence. You think this Indian corn's goin' ...me on any better whether it's New Hampshire Province or ... Hampshire State? Independence from what?"

"Well, from England. The King."

"I wouldn't know him from Adam if he was to come over ... wall—only for the way they would have him rigged up. ...and ain't never bothered me that I know of."

"She might not have you, but I guess she has some."

"That may be so. But I couldn't cut mast trees, it was too far ...aul 'em. I never used any stamps—I never even saw one. This ...ble they had about tea down t' Portsmouth—and Boston, I ...ss—I ain't goin' t' shoot nor be shot at for a noggin of tea. ...ey talk about taxes. I never paid any taxes to any King's officer, ...y never come after me. Nor I ain't a slave, either—not so far I know."

"No," Hackett agreed, "I don't know that you be."

"And where's your Independence if you got t' tie up with ...rkers, Virginians, and Connecticut people, and—and, well, ...oever the rest of 'em be?"

Hackett said he didn't know.

But Whit wouldn't stop. "Britainer soldiers are bad, that I ...ant you. I don't want 'em around no more 'n anyone does. But ...ey ain't none around here, are they? I ain't see any sign. In ...oston there is, but that's nothin' to me. There are plenty of ...ttlesnakes up on the mountain, but I don't feel no call to go ...ckle 'em, not until they come round. When they do, then I w... ...lon't care nothin' about no Independence—not so long as ...ave me alone t' work my place as I please. Let 'em ... Sandwich, and to Gilmanton, too. They can have ...

ence. I got work to do here." And he added, "And rum don' *on my stomach so well as it might."*

Hackett said, "Yes, I can see how you feel. You about here now, are you? We could go up to the house. I got a d liver here I thought your woman might like."

"Yes, I'm about done. *I'll* just hang up *this hoe."*

"Your Indian's good, Whit. It is higher than most."

Whit had stepped over to hang his hoe in a tree. *"We'd* to have rain," he said

"We will, in a minute."

"I think that's goin' round. They generally go down th' camp to Great Ossipy Pond."

The lightning was hot and the thunder close by. Hackett "We're goin' t' get it, all right."

Whit said, "Maybe the edge of it," and they started up to the house.

Melissa came to the doorway when they were a little ways She had on her blue apron, and she had moccasins on—in of its being full summer. They were beaded deerskin. Her was twisted up tight.

Hackett and Whit were both looking at her. Hackett s "Whit, she holds her age good." And he looked forward supper.

"I guess maybe she does. She don't hold back on the though. And we ain't had any sickness We been *lucky in that*

"And you ain't got but two young ones." He enjoyed comi here. The inside of their house always smelled clean and fe clean. He was as much at ease in their house as he was in th woods. He could hear the rain coming now, but he said nothi to Whit—and the first drops started falling. . . .

A dozen yards off, they could see she was smiling, but sh *hadn't spoken—and wouldn't—until they were up to the door*

A hard thrust of lightning, and the splitting and jolting, n ing crash of the thunder filled the whole place. Still, neither ma hurried.

Melissa stood to one side as they came into the house. She ed, "You two had walked any slower tryin' t' show off to each her, you'd have looked awful temptin' t' that lightnin', I think." nd then she greeted Hackett and asked how he was.

Hackett said he was well. "I see a cow once that had got by the lightnin'. By God, she was stiffer than as if she'd been ze."

Whit had turned in the doorway and was watching the tree-s. The wind had them tossing, but the storm hadn't struck . He still thought that the worst of it might go around.

6 TAKING THINGS altogether, Whit made a good vest. It was better than last year, he was certain of that, al-ough he couldn't reckon it to any one figure—as so many shels, or dollars, or pounds. It was this thing, and that thing, me better than others—while his late Indian corn, for ex-mple, hadn't done well at all. It had had too much rain in the iddle time of its growing and had run all to leaves, the ears no lling out. But the stalks and the leaves would feed his cows in e wintertime, and he could not call the planting an absolute oss. The big yellow squashes that Melissa should have had in er garden were missing, they'd done more or less the same hing—they'd put out big blossoms but they didn't head up. But his early Indian corn—that he had been hilling the day Hez Hackett came the second week in July—had come up after the thunderstorm and gone on to bear a good yield.

His potatoes were wonderful—the best he'd ever had. He en-joyed every minute of digging them—on raw, windy days with November close by. The frost had blackened the plants and they drooped and looked poorly, it didn't seem as though they could bear anything that would be really worth while. And then he'd turn over a forkful of earth with a little thin frozen crust —and there'd be potatoes as big as his fist!—not to small ones that would fatten the pigs. Another fine

was about a potato: it was finished and ready when he took i of the ground. Grain cut and shocked wasn't more than done yet; it had to be thrashed and winnowed and cleaned, it had to be ground into meal before a woman could coo Indian corn had to be husked and then pounded. But pick potato and knock the dirt off—and there she was ready to th into the pot.

Of his cattle, as well, he had had a good increase, both am his neat cattle and also his swine. He would dress out eno pork later on in the winter so that they could eat wild mea not as Melissa might choose. There wouldn't be many in town could say that.

Whit took as much comfort as he could from these matt He knew he had done well, and he was proud that he had. there was too much ahead, there were too many things lacki for him to sit down and gloat on the present as compared w the past.

That held him up now was that he was ahead of the rest n. He had got there the first, and so he was furt g. He felt the need of things that most other men did ed, things he was ready for that the rest of them weren't was tired of living in a little log house, he wanted a board hou —and Melissa did, too, although she never fretted at all. B boards meant a mill. Everyone else, of course, would have be glad to have a mill handy—but they weren't quite ready to after one yet. They felt the same way that Whit had in his fi three or four years they had so much to do that was right und their hands that they couldn't pay much attention to anythin else. Their log houses would serve till they had their lan cleared; it would be time enough then for them to think abo boards.

It was the same way with grain. You take a man who gre only stump corn to feed himself and his wife—and perhaps few children—he could pound it at home, or she could anyhow He didn't need any mill. But Whit had got beyond that. He

…ored a gristmill where he could get his corn ground. He …ed a miller who would trade for his grain—that is, over and …ve what he needed himself.

…t the town wasn't ready to get together and put up a mill, …Proprietors didn't, and so no miller came. Nor was one likely …ome of himself until he could count on more than one cus…er to make his mill go. Until it would pay, there wouldn't be … mill. Still, it couldn't be long—Onesiphorus and the rest of …Masons would stand in need of a mill pretty soon. Bradbury …ell did now,—but he lived nearer to Sandwich.

Roads were another thing. A man who stayed on his own …e and ate all he could grow, could get along while he did that …out any roads. But Whit had stuff now that he wanted to … Roads would have helped him, and bridges, of course. …he couldn't build bridges alone by himself, and he couldn't … roads just himself and his ax. But not until the day came …n enough felt the same need would they get together and do …thing.

Still, there were signs of its coming, and it wasn't far off. Men …east argued over the proper site for a mill—everyone wanting …earest his place—and while talk wouldn't build a mill, still …ad to come first. They talked of bridges and roads more than …y did of the war. The war was petering out. General George …ashington appeared to get trimmed every time they caught … with him. He'd had to clear out of New York along in Sep…mber, and from then on he lost battles every time one was …ught He was retreating across the state of New Jersey—but … good part of his army was on its way home. They had enlisted … fight in a war, the war had been lost—and so they went home. … they stayed with the army only two things were certain, and …ey were hunger and cold—although there was a good chance … sickness, a good chance to get captured, a good chance to get …ounded, and a fair chance to get killed. And all to no p…

…ecause the war had been lost. Anyone could see …

General George Washington—who by the end of …

had his white horse and about three thousand men. knew why the three thousand had stayed; the horse was wel and couldn't get loose to go home.

But whatever their reasons, these men hung on. And then night in December, they crossed over a river and jumpe some Hessians who were drunk and asleep. General Wash ton's army might not have been able to do very well when other side was awake. But they did all right this time: they k all the Hessians they could lay their hands on.

This was on Christmas Day It kept the war going.

Soon after this, on the third day of January, General Ge Washington offered his men ten dollars extra if they wou go home. Enough of them took it so that, if they were to on through the winter, he'd have a crew to start up with a in the spring.

With Whit and Melissa, the winter went well. The s wasn't deep—but enough to haul on—and Whit got in cordwood; and he cleaned most of his rye, and hunted a little didn't get very much. Four times in that winter when weather was bright, they went to a neighbor's Twice, at ...s', they stayed most of the night. But when they wer the Philbricks', they left the children at home so as to have excuse to come back before Whit should say anything Jona Philbrick rubbed Whit the wrong way. If it hadn't been Whit had known David and been friendly with him, he Jonathan Philbrick perhaps might have got on. But Jona Philbrick was loud in his talk, and all he talked of was th he claimed to have done. And although Melissa pointed ou Whit—once, anyhow—that Whit was the one who had wanted Mary to marry again—and to marry Jonathan Philb —it didn't do any good.

When they went to the Masons', though, they had a g time. There were a half dozen Masons who all lived near gether, and they would put all the children in one hou and then in another the grown people would visit a drink cider or rum, and pretty soon sing. Onesipho

idn't seem like that kind, was a great one to dance, and 'd get him to jig. They had a floor in their house, and Onesi- would put on boots with heels on them, and with the of them singing and clapping, he'd *go to it* good. If *they'd* someone to play, he could have done better, he said.

When they'd get back home, they wouldn't have more than e to lie down before Melissa'd have to fix breakfast and tackle his chores. It was surprising, though: all the next he would feel pretty good.

7 ON THE first day of February, a man coming through them that Jonas Moore out in Sandwich was in a bad way. 'd got the prongs of a fish spear run clear through his hand, his arm had swelled up, and a fever come on.

They heard this at noontime—and it was snowing hard then. Whit was in Jonas's dooryard with two hours light left.

He stepped off his snowshoes and hung them up on the house, eat the snow off his clothes, and turned to go in the door. But la Moore'd heard him, and she had come out.

Whit knew from her face that the man's story was true.

She said, "You didn't need to come, Whit. Melissa all right?"

"Oh, yes, we're all rugged How're you comin' on?"

"Well, Whit, I don't know."

"That's what I was afraid."

"You want to come in and look at him? He won't know that you're here."

Jonas was lying on his bed on the floor; he had his face turned to the fire. The man whose turn it was watching was sitting at one end of the hearth, but Whit didn't know him, and gave him only a glance. Jonas's lips were drawn back, and his eyes sunken and dull. He lay perfectly still, but his breathing was short—although not so fast as it might have been. They'd cut off his sh at the shoulder and bound a poultice of flaxseed the whole of his arm, and his hand was tied up in bacon fat.

Whit stood and looked down at him—and then he k down. But Jonas's eyes never moved. Whit could see by veins at the side of Jonas's neck that his heart was going alon a terrible rate. He was bad, right enough—there was no ques of that. But he didn't look wasted. And Ida Moore'd mana somehow to keep him wonderfully clean.

Whit, for some reason, didn't feel upset at all. He stood and went to the other end of the room where Mrs. Moore wa Together they went outside and stood in the lee of the ho "When was it?" Whit asked.

She told him the story. A week ago yesterday, Henry Ch burn and Jonas had been a mile down the shore spearing in the night. The way the accident happened: Jonas was wat ing on his hands and knees by the hole, and Henry Chadbu was touching up one of the points of the spear with a file. Jo saw one, and keeping his eye on it, he said to Chadburn, "G me that spear—" Chadburn stepped toward him, tripped o a piece of wood for the fire, and trying to save himself th down with the spear—and jammed it down squarely throu Jonas's hand.

Chadburn claimed Jonas hadn't even cried out.

. . . and it had been Jonas himself who, one at a time, had fil the prongs off the fish spear so that they could be drawn through his hand. They had to do this on account of

Ida Moore said the hand hadn't looked very bad after she washed it up—only the four little holes in the back and the —and he could work all his fingers. Still, they'd put the fat to it right then and there so as to be on the safe side, an Jonas had got full of rum and had slept pretty good.

The little holes in his hand had closed up right away—b then his hand had started to swell and it had gone clear up h arm. Then the fever had come. He was quiet right now, b night before last it had taken two men to hold him. "Th people," she said, "have been awful kind. There's been som body watchin' day and night ever since."

Whit nodded. "I don't suppose you ever watched any for em, did you, before?"

"Well—"

"He can't eat nothin', now, can he?"

"No, but he'll drink. Since the fever's been on him he's dry all time no matter how much he drinks. I steep pine spills in water and let him drink that."

"Best thing," Whit agreed.

"Dan'l Beede has offered to send and bring up a doctor. But I know well as I do what he'd want to do. That hand isn't, it ain't rotten at all."

"Didn't look to me like it. And you say it wan't stove-up any?"

"Not a mite. No."

"That's a sign, then. You couldn't fit them four prongs through his hand without stavin' up somethin' no matter how hard you tried. That hand is meant to be saved. I wouldn't let a doctor go near it. Anyone bled him?"

"Beede did, yes. Didn't seem to do any good."

"In his leg, I guess, didn't he?"

"Ayuh."

"Whatever's got hold of him is up in his arm." He was silent and thoughtful....

Ida Moore said, "You know anything else?"

Whit went right ahead. "There's one thing you could try. It isn't quite the full moon yet, but it will be pretty soon. You know them little blisters on a fir balsam tree? When the moon's at its bigness, them blisters swell up. You take the juice out of one, and give him five drops of that. It's awful rugged, they claim."

"He can't wait for no moon."

"Well, then give him ten—his stomach is strong. I ain't quite certain how much of their power'll be into 'em now, but I should think prob'ly enough. If it don't seem to take hold, we c'n try it again when the moon's right up in shape. I know where there's a tree. Do you want to try that?"

"You mean he's to *drink* it?"

"Yes, that'd be best. You'll have to add somethin' to it. T little drops by themselves wouldn't get past his tongue. I w say water. If you give him rum, it'll heat his blood all the m

"Where is the tree?"

"Well, I d' know but I'd wait till the moon has come up. won't be more than an hour or two. It ought to work through snow even though we can't see it."

"Well, all right. You know best. But, Whit, in the meant *if there's anything you want to try . . . .*"

"Yes, ma'am, there is. Will you leave me alone with him

"Go ahead in to him. Tell that feller that's in there to c out here to me. John Dillon, his name is" She turned away.

But before Whit had taken a step, she turned back a "And—and—"

Whit nodded

"Go ahead in," she said. "I'll wait out here."

As Dillon went out the door, Whit knelt again beside Jo He passed his hand in front of Jonas's eyes—saw that they d move—and then took out his knife. He cut off a strand of Jon hair, and held that in his lips. Then he lifted Jonas's hand— one that was hurt The ends of the fingers were free, but t were swollen and hard.

Jonas stirred . . . and was quiet.

Whit got a small shred or splinter off of each fingernail. T nails were brittle and dry, and hard to get at. The thumbnail w hopeless, and he let it go. He figured this was all right: if it h been anyone else, he'd have taken a piece of the nail from ev one finger.

He laid Jonas's hand down very gently again—looked in h face for a moment—and then turned to the fire.

Whit's heart was beating as fast as Jonas's was.

He drew some hot, burning coals out onto the hearth . . . an his hand shook as he sprinkled the gray hairs on the pile an added the fingernails. The hairs puffed into flame and shrivele

bright, and then twisted and writhed, and the pieces of finger-nail smoked and curled up.

Whit spoke in silence the words that he knew. . . .

. . . and his whole body was shaken. He heard Jonas stir—and Whit's lips moved faster. Sweat ran on his face—and he heard Jonas cry out.

Then Whit sat back on his haunches, and his arms drooped at his sides.

As soon as he could, he got to his feet. He looked down at Jonas, who was quiet again.

Then he went to the door—and the cold wind on his face made him feel stronger. He went round the house and as Mrs. Moore turned to him, he said, "I'm goin' t' go git the fir balsam. Guess the moon's up enough."

Ida Moore went inside, and when she bent down to Jonas she thought he seemed a little mite easier than he had before. When she turned round to the fire, she saw the coals on the hearth. She looked back at Jonas—and then again at the coals . . . and then she took her broom and brushed the hearth smooth.

She took a deep breath and stood up very straight. She felt more hopeful than she had before.

Jonas came through all right.

He wasn't really himself again until late in the spring—but at least he had his two hands. Ida Moore never told him of the coals on the hearth, and Jonas's fever dreams were something he didn't talk much about.

Jonas went trouting with Henry Chadburn in May. Chadburn knew why he did it, and was grateful to him.

18 WHIT WAS having his dinner on a hot morning in June. He was glad it was dinnertime. The hearth was empty cool; they'd moved the fire outside. A man can get pretty ti

the smell of warm earth on a muggy June day with the fl
round his head. It was quiet here, too. Jonas and Gowan we
out by the cowyard where they'd get some good from t
smudge.

Melissa came in with a big dish of boiled greens. "Maso
boy, Henry—he's the middle one, ain't he?—is comin'
through the corn. He ain't hurryin' any, so I guess it ain't mu
—either that or the weather." She set the dish on the table.

"Them look pretty good," he said, and took up his kni
"Prob'ly want me t' come over 'n help 'em roll up to burn. Th
let lay some big trees there till it was too late for the snow."

"You goin'?"

"I don't want to tomorrow, but I might the next day. I tho
this mornin' that Beauty's off shoulder might be a little m
lame."

"You want me to tell him?"

"No." He had his mouth full. "This a nice mess o' gre
you know it?" he said

The boy stood in the doorway. He was about ten or el
years old Whit said, "Come in."

But young Henry Mason had his mind on his own words. H
hooked his toes over the doorsill, and recited, "Pa said to te
you Town Meetin' Day's set. A week from today. Richard Hol
comb's, he said"

"Thank him for me. You get your dinner yet?"

Henry nodded his head.

"You could eat some syrup and johnnycake, though, if yo
tried."

They could see his quick grin—and he said politely, "I might."

Melissa gave him a piece, which—syrup and all—he took i
his hand—and he disappeared from the door. Melissa'd intende
that he take the plate in his hands, and she was wondering—
mildly—why she hadn't seen to it he did... and then she turne
round and saw Whit. He was staring off into space, sitting per
fectly motionless. It was on the end of her tongue to ask him
what was the matter—but then she held herself from it.

He got up, on a sudden, and went and stood on the edge of the earth with his back to the fireplace, and she saw him, from habit, spread his hands to the warmth as though the fire'd been there. "I want the bridge," he said, "where it'll be the best place for ... I *think* that Fred Mason would be a good selectman."

—Melissa was wiping the syrup drops up from the floor.

"But they can vote to build *their dang bridge* halfway up ...bank Brook, where Hez Hackett and deers 'd be the only ...s cross—and I'll work with 'em on it! They could vote Duti... Jackman, or worse'n him, even, to be selectman—and I ...uldn't wonder they will. All right, then, let 'em. Let him be ...ectman."

He swung round to Melissa. "You know who votes at Town ...eetin'?"

"Why, all of you do."

"That's *right*—that have places"—and he said it so fiercely ...at she didn't know what to think. And with his voice *rising*, ...lot Jonathan Moulton. Not Leftenant Webster. Not any ...oprietors This is them that *live* here. This here is for us. This ...re is Town Meetin'!"—and then his voice fell away—"like ...ey used to have it to Kettleford, *only I couldn't go*."

He stepped across the small room, and leaned in the doorway, ...oking out across his hot field as it lay ready to work. Over on ...e other side of the hill, in the Masons' big interval, they were ...ght at it most likely; they were great men to work. More off to ...e right would be the line to the Jewells', *and still more to the* ...*ght, and four miles away*, the Birch Interval men were prob...ly bending their backs in amongst their stump corn. Face any ...rection, there would be men at work—or it might be they ...dn't finished their dinners quite yet

"Seven years," he said to her—"come *this autumn, it is*."

"Ayuh, seven years"

"I never voted at nothin' before." ... And then he hitched up ...s belt. "Well, I got to get back to work. You want me to call ...em two young ones?"

"You ain't eat your own dinner, yet."

"There, now, I ain't! Well, I'll call 'em up anyway." And did, with a long-drawn-out "Yo-o-o . . ." that could have b heard at Jonathan Philbrick's if the wind had been right.

They would vote at high noon. It lacked a half hour of . . . and Whit moved about past one group and another in shade of the big sugar maple in Richard Holcomb's door He gathered that Bradbury Jewell would be first select There were more people living in Jewell's part of the t than there were in any other one part. Well—Jewell w probably be better than some. He was square, so they said, he would not be afraid to stand up to Jonathan Moulton or one else. And he had started already to build a brick !

There didn't seem to be a great deal of argument among men waiting about. There were not many drunk, and t hadn't been any fights. The women were all round the other of the house, but children were plentiful wherever he loo There were almost no dogs. Some of the talk was of the mee to come. But not all of it was. There was also some scatter talk of the war "Burgoyne," a man said, "what he figures to is t' keep comin' south the whole way t' New York. Down lake first, and then down Hudson River."

"How does he figure to get past Fort Ti?" That was it.

"Well, I couldn't say."

"And no more can he," the second man said. "By God, wh you tell me how he's goin' t' get around Ti, then I'll set up take notice of Gen'ral Burgoyne."

This seemed to suit everyone.

But then somebody said, "How about Indians?"

Nobody wanted to tackle this one. So they looked at the m who'd disposed of Burgoyne, and he had to say, "Oh, was yo speakin' t' me?"

The other man shrugged his shoulders. "You or anyone else said, 'How about Indians?'"

"You mean that they claim he has got on his side?"

"He says so himself, don't he? Thousands, he claims."

"It don't cost very much to claim you got Indians."

"It don't cost a damn thing. But it'll cost a good many the tops of their heads if he turns out to be right, won't it?"

"Well, I never did fancy to live in the Grants." They all laughed at this—but not very hard.

Someone said, "Eli, that old boar o' yourn poorly yet?"

Eli's pride in his pig was a long-standing joke. "Poorly!" said Eli. "He ain't no good 't all. You want t' buy him? I'll sell him cheap."

Whit moved along. He'd made up his mind he was going to vote for Fred Mason. He was a neighbor of Fred's. He didn't see Jewell five times in a year.

Bradbury Jewell sat on a hemlock stump, one leg over the other, and chewing a twig. He didn't appear to be greatly concerned. Except for a pair of new bright yellow breeches—deerskin, they looked to be, with a touch of saffron for dye—he wasn't dressed out any more than was anyone else. True, he had moccasins, which some didn't have, but his gray linen shirt could have been any man's. He spoke to Whit pleasantly when Whit came in range, asked him how his oxen were doing, and in fact called them by name. He said he'd seen Jonas Moore back there one day last week, and that Jonas had said he was feeling all right.

But Jewell didn't say or do anything to try to get Whit to vote for him, and Whit took it that Jewell knew he was already ...

Jewell turned to another man, and Whit walked away. He himself had whittled the buttons for the front of his pants; the buttons on Bradbury's breeches were brass.

He saw Fred Mason standing in the rim of a circle of five or six men. Fred appeared to be listening while the others talked past his face. Fred never said much when there were many around. Still, he had a good head on him, everybody knew that. Get him alone, and that was the time he would talk. Cutting wood, it might be, two men working together, and when they'd sit down for a spell, then he'd open up. Whit had worked

him; they got along well. Mason could read, and sometime winter he would read in a book in the evening just to himself—not spelling it out, but going right ahead, fast. hadn't seen him, but he didn't doubt that he could. Mason taller than most, and easy and strong—in some ways a little David Philbrick had been. But with more quickness than at least in his face.

But Jewell had the most neighbors, there was no gett round that—and every man wanted the bridge to be handy him. If it had been only a question of just the two men, W wasn't sure but what Mason might win. He'd have a chance, a how. He was related to a good many here.

Then Whit got an idea; if Bradbury Jewell was certain win, the bridge was gone anyhow. All right, let it go. Let Ma say to them now that *he* favored putting the bridge where the bulk of them wanted it put. Then let them vote for sele man . . . and see who would win.

He made up his mind to go and suggest this to Fred And found himself walking over to do it—when he was stopped his tracks by the full noise of a drum.

Everybody looked round—

Charlie Griffin was doing it; he'd been a soldier back in time of the war—that was some time ago now, that was twent years back. Charlie's face was set hard . . . he could handle drum! The sound came in waves . . . and then stopped.

Richard Holcomb stepped forward. He called out to Fred Mason and told him to come up Fred, looking unhappy, did a he was told—and Holcomb said for him to stand over there little off to one side. Bradbury Jewell still sat on his stump. Then Holcomb told all of them that he would read out the names of those who were to vote, and when a man heard his name called he was to come up and stand with either Jewell or Mason.

Then he began. "Anthony Cogswell,"—as loud as he could Nobody moved . . . and they began looking round. "Anthony Cogswell . . . ?"—and a dozen men commented, "I see him round here a minute ago."

", "The hell with him," and some, "Call off the next,"
as to where Anthony was.
y Holcomb took a look at the roll, and bawled, "Israel
[illegible]"—just as Cogswell appeared hurrying out of the barn.
all shouted at Cogswell—who made no defense—and after
little bewilderment, he went over to Jewell. There was no
from Cogswell's expression as to just what he was think-
he was wishing he could take a dull knife and cut the two
off every man in the crowd.
[illegible]el Meacham also voted for Jewell.
[illegible]ngs got very quiet. Three men to one were going over to
[illegible]l. There was no cheering, no voices were loud—just the
murmur of whisper and nod.
The women had come round the end of the house and were
[illegible]hing in silence.
[illegible]adbury Jewell with his thumbs in his waistband, his feet
[illegible] apart, and his head tilted back, appeared to be gazing over
heads of the men . . . and now and again he'd look down at
ground at his feet. He gave no greeting to the men who came
[illegible] stood by him, and his face didn't change any—he had it
[illegible] But Whit could see his eyes moving. Bradbury Jewell was
[illegible]ing count of the men who were voting against him. He'd
[illegible]er have to ask anyone who they had been
Whit looked round for Melissa two or three times He didn'
[illegible] her, but he was sure she was there
There weren't many left now—eight or ten, maybe . . . nov
[illegible]ly six. .
If Whit's name wasn't called—if Holcomb had skipped it—
Holcomb would say to him afterward, "B' God, Whit, I misse
[illegible]u. I don't know how I come to do that. But I guess it don
[illegible]ake any difference." And Whit would have to say, "No."
'Whit Livingston," Holcomb called out.
Whit took it for granted they were all looking at him. F
[illegible]new Melissa was anyhow . . . and he held his head up. Ea
[illegible]tep was separate. He looked straight ahead. On either sic
[illegible]ouldn't see anyone. . .

He was proud of himself, and he was proud to be voting.

Then Fred Mason, in front of him, said, "H'lo, Whit." Whit answered, "—Fred." Onesiphorus moved over a step. got plenty of room," he said. "We ain't crowded at all." Whit grinned a little and turned round to face out. He felt li headed and free. Bradbury Jewell, his thumbs in his waist was looking off somewhere.... And then Whit saw Melissa he saw her smile.

Holcomb called out the names of the ones there were They all went to Jewell. Whit was glad that they did.

When the last man had voted, there was a stir, and a risi voices in talk—but nobody cheered. Holcomb shouted to them, "Now we'll eat dinner."

A hand was on Whit's shoulder a second, and Fred M said, "Thank you," and then turned away.

Whit started across to where he'd seen Melissa. He felt oughly happy... but not quite like himself. And then he saw making her way through the moving crowd toward him. She her sunbonnet back, and she was smiling a little bit because enjoyed having all the people about. She had the two boys w her, one on each side. When she caught sight of Whit, her f lighted up—and Whit felt pretty certain that she was not ge to ask him why he didn't feel worse that Fred Mason l

They ate the lunch that they'd brought—and there was laug ing and shouting and some visiting round, and wrestling beg to break out, first among the young children, but then workin up through the boys and young men. Anthony Cogswell a fight with a man, but they got them apart and took Anthon knife. Awhile after that, they tried to have some more meetin but a good many were drunk now, and the meeting didn't g very far. And with milkingtime coming on, people began to g home.

Whit and Melissa walked home through the woods. The tw boys were on ahead sometimes, and sometimes behind. It wa

e miles to walk home. They talked for a time of the people 'd seen, but before long their talk lessened. There were ths of evenings ahead.

alking, the flies didn't bother them much.

ere was no need to talk of how Whit had felt. He would nber it always. . . .

e longer they walked, and as they approached their own , Whit found that the day—the men and the meeting, the and the talk—dropped further and further behind him till nd turned ahead to how the things that he'd left to look r themselves might have fared through the day. He guessed were probably all right—they left them at night in the winey ought to be all right by day in the month of July. He'd smudge in the cowyard, was all; the cook-fire, he'd covered. wouldn't be any bears come around, and the kind of man would steal would sooner go to Town Meeting in hopes of um. You take back in the old days, though, it must have hard—back in the Indian times—a man wouldn't leave his then with nobody to watch—or he would probably feel e when he was on his way home if he had left his wife and hildren at home . . his house burnt to the ground, his cattle l or run off, that would be bad enough But if he'd left his ly, too—

'ell, there was no use thinking that way Those days were . Threescore of families now in the town.

e could hear the two youngsters back a ways on the path— a few minutes more, they came to the edge of the woods and there up on the rise, up across the low corn, his house the buildings in the late afternoon sun looked peaceful and t. The smudge was still going, but it wasn't putting up a t deal of smoke. Old Jen had heard them. he saw her come d the house—

le hadn't known it, but he had stopped and stood still—and issa came up beside him.

le said, "I like to look at it."

PART FOUR

The Mountain ✍ 1777

1 WHIT WAS on his way down to the edge of the pond
try for a pickerel. There were reasons why he had to do t
July was the month for them, and he hadn't been yet—and
first week in July had already gone by It was a lowery day w
out very much wind, and Melissa, that morning, had killed
mouse with her broom. When Whit had asked her at noont
if she'd like a pickerel to eat, she had said that she would
now he was on his way down. He had the mouse in his pock

He found his pole near the pond where he'd left it the l
time, and he sat down on a spruce log to rig up his bait.
mosquitoes were thick and it was a delicate task, but with so
waxed linen thread he finally got the mouse tied to the shan
of the hook—and it looked pretty good. He made his line fa
through the eye of the hook, and then he fastened a hemlo
cone onto the line about a handsbreadth in front of the nose
the mouse.

He took this down to the water just as it was—without a
pole—to see how it would float.... It seemed perfect at first. T
mouse stayed right side up because of the weight of the hoo
and as he drew it along on top of the water, it appeared to b
swimming to catch up with the cone. It was a beautiful rig. W
grinned with delight. But when the mouse sank. Its fur had g
wetted through.

Whit lifted it out and considered... and the mosquitoes gre
thicker and tried to hurry his thoughts.

He knew what he wanted: he wanted some air in that mous
—and he had no liking at all for putting that mouse's head i

teeth. If he'd had an oat straw right handy, that would have just the thing.

ith the point of his knife, he pricked loose the thread that round the neck of the mouse, and then he hung the whole ess safely over a twig, and went in search of a small, hollow of some kind. This took a lot longer than he'd have sup-, but he got one at last . . . and it was no trick at all to blow e mouse. It really looked better than it had before. And it d most handsomely—although it canted a trifle, but not h to do any hurt.

r foot of line was what he used to skitter with generally, e thought this time he'd use six.

th the mouse dangling and bobbing from the end of his he waded into the water—his eye fixed on an open space lily pads well out from shore. He had about twenty feet pole. When he saw that he'd gone far enough, he got his rmly set—the depth of the water was now about up to his —and he lowered the mouse to the surface with the great- care and started to tow it out across the open space in the There was a little small wave at each side of the mouse nd then Bang! the light green of a pickerel curved up out of water, his great jaws were wide open, and he hit that mouse a y that carried the end of the pole a yard under water—and it there, too, with a steady pull mostly, and occasional jerks. Whit set his hook, and then began to back up. The footing soft and uneven, and as he was stepping over a log on the tom that he'd missed going out, the fish came up out of er and seemed to stand right up on his tail, shaking his head nd Whit, dipping the pole to him, nearly sat down.

Well, it went on for some time, the pickerel off and on mak- a dive for the bottom and the grass and the weeds, and then an his fin showing moving slowly along, and Whit trying to ep the pole at an angle to the line of the pull and at the same e backing up trying to get in to the shore. But the time finally me when, with his heart in his mouth, Whit hoisted him up t of the water and swung him up onto the bank, dropped

pole—and went for him on his hands and knees like a boy. got him!—and, oh, he was a beauty! He must have been eas yard or more long.

The mouse was stove-up too much to be any more use— Whit tossed him into the bushes for the first fox come alo The hook was all right.

Whit didn't know that he wanted to fish any more. He put pole up, and with the line and the thread and the hook pocket, he picked up his fish, and started up through the wo home.

It had been *pretty near perfect.*

—he would joke Melissa about it, and claim she hadn't lieved that he'd do so well, but that he'd known himself that would. Why, any time she wanted a pickerel, all she had to was to say so, and he'd go get her one.

It worked out that way, too, when he got up to the house!

But before he could set off to clean it, she said to him, "Wh there was a man come by here while you was down t' the pon For Fryeburg, he was."

"What was his name?"

"Collins, it sounded like. He said you didn't know him."

"Well, he was correct."

"He said he was just on his way. He said to tell you they ha taken Fort Ti."

Whit laid down the pickerel. "Tell me the rest."

"Well— They give it up, he said, without any fight. He sai the Britainers—General Burgoyne and them—had them ered, he said, and they went off in the night."

"Had them *'covered'!* Fort Ti?"

"That's what he said."

"You can't have a fort covered. That's what a *fort's* for! Wh is this Collins? What's he look like? You mean to say they jus up and *surrendered?* What'd they do that for? How long ag was he here?"

"Half the time you been gone, maybe. 'Bout that, I should think."

"Was he travelin' fast?"

He wouldn't stop to eat nothin'."

He seem like a sober—a sensible man?"

Ayuh."

They just give it up! They run off in the night!"

That's what he claimed."

Well, I don't understand." He started walking about, turning way and that, and then he caught sight of his fish—and he ed at it as though he were saying "How'd that ever get ?"

elissa said, "Do you want me to clean that?"

No, I'll do it," he said. "I'll go do it now." He picked up the

Whit, where is Fort Ti? I never knew, rightly. I heard you k of it, but I never knew."

Hundred and fifty mile west, I should think."

Will they come over here?"

Will who come over here?"

Britainers"

"No"—and trailing the fish with its tail in the dirt, he went n across the dooryard and round back of the shed.

Whit wasn't concerned about Britainer soldiers, they would ve slowly. And they weren't headed this way. Indians, ough . . .

He had a bad time of it cleaning that fish He wanted to think, t this was not a good chance The insides of a pickerel don't me out as slick as do those of a trout, and there is a smell to em that mosquitoes like Whit needed both hands to the siness, and care not to get cut And he was hungry, to boot. With mosquitoes pricking his face and on the backs of his ands, it was hard to get anything straight in his head.

He had better luck with it when supper was done. There was nough smoke in the house to keep down the mosquitoes and midges, and the black flies and his children had both gone bed.

Whit said to her finally, "They must a sold the "

head one, I guess, prob'ly—name of St. Clair. How else could be? Can you see any way?"

Melissa said, no, she supposed that must be it. "Whit, how you figure they won't come over here?"

"Nothin' t' bring 'em. They head for big towns—like same as New York. Even for Boston or Portsmouth, they wo go some south of here. And another thing is, they got too m to lug. They got women and cannon and—oh, all kinds of tr Where they are now, they can haul that in boats. If they wa come here from Ti, it'd be mostly all through the woods"

"Well, all the same . . ."

"All the same, nothin'. They won't come over here. You take my word for it."

"I heard they got Indians"

"Who told you that?"

"Two or three women. Town Meetin' Day."

Whit took the short route. "Yes, I heard the same thing said. "No one knows if it's true. I ain't sure that it is."

"You ain't sure it ain't, either."

"No, I'll admit that."

"Two hundred mile," she said, "ain't much to an Indian. The used t' come down from Canady further 'n that."

"Yes, they can travel. They ain't loaded down—a knife, and gun, and them little hatchets they got. But why should the *come* here? Ain't there enough cattle to steal in the Grants For ten years I been hearin' how rich the Grants be. That's wh brings Indians. They ain't in it to fight."

She said "Maybe" reluctantly . . . and went to the doorway to the other room where the boys were. She listened a moment, and came back and sat down. "They're asleep," she assured him.

"I ain't holdin' back nothin'."

"All right," she answered, "then neither am I. 'They ain't in it to fight,' you say. All right, then, they ain't. What they're in it for is the same as before. I know the stories. I heard 'em too often. I wan't hard of hearin' when I was a girl. I know about

in' and stealin' and all. And I know the rest of it—the part ain't talked of when women 're there."

"You heard it wrong. They ain't hot after women, Indians

"I mean the torture. I know what they do. I heard them tell when I was real small. There was some of the words then, I didn't know what *they meant. But I ain't forgot any,* never will. When I think of them comin', my bowels turn. It's the same way with most people. You know that it is."

...it examined a scratch on the inside of his wrist. "You even know," he said, "*if Gen'ral Burgoyne has got so much* Indian joined up on his side. Do you, now?"

"No."

"And neither do I. Then why do you talk that way?"

"Because that's how I feel. I get kind of tired of not lettin' *now and again,* I do. *Don't you ever . . . sometimes?*"

"Everyone does. The way you feel about Indians is the way a many do. Women do, anyhow And a good many men. In Grants, more so'

"I am sorry for them."

"In the Grants, you mean, yes. I am too, in a way. But I ain't certain there'll be *Indian trouble* I have thought about this—" as she opened her mouth, he said, "Let me say my say." And let him.

"This Gen'ral Burgoyne can't be quite a fool. Because if he a fool, he wouldn't have got so far Montreal to past Ti—he done pretty good And he ain't got *t' be awful clever t' figure* why. Who's *tried t' stop him?* The army, is all He can handle army. He done it at Ti. All right. If he keeps this business tween armies, you see, he c'n keep right on a-goin' *till he gets* far t' New York There's Tories enough t' sell him food on way. And as for the bulk of the people—well, *they ain't done* nothin' yet, and if he knows *what is* good for him—and I figure *may—Gen'ral* Burgoyne'll let sleepin' dogs lie."

"Maybe," Melissa said.

"Because next when he turns Indians

You know there ain't any Indian goin' t' hold back just beca a man is a Tory. No, sir. The first house they come to they'll c on just the same whether a man is a Tory or Sam Adams's so or if he ain't the one nor the other, same as most around h All right. You let 'em fire one haystack, let 'em rip off thei scalp—and every man in the Grants'll be down on Gen'ral B goyne. He won't get time t' turn round in his tracks. I'd tempted myself—I d' know but I would."

"What?"

"I d' know but I would be."

"You mean that you'd go?"

"I don't know but I might. It's the same as you said yours there hadn't anyone ought t' do that—turn Indians loose."

Melissa tried to go back—but she knew it was too late. I shouldn't wonder but you'd figured it right," she said won't turn 'em loose. And supposin' he should, they won't co over here I ain't afeard at all. I wan't t' begin with. It was the way some of them women talked."

"Yes. I understand." He got up from his place. "Well, I go go do my chores, I guess"

"Yes. It's pretty near dark. I hadn't noticed."

Whit stood where he was. "Now don't you fret. I ain't goi t'morrow. I may not go at all. Nor I wouldn't go off and l you unless I thought 'twas all right."

"I know you wouldn't."

"We don't know nothin' yet We'll have t' just wait and see He went out to his chores

. . . and Melissa sat there and waited—hearing his step in barn, hearing his voice as he spoke to his beasts—she sat the and waited for him to come back.

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2 LATE THE next afternoon, Whit walked across the hi to the Masons'. He wanted to talk over these things with som man.

When he was still a quarter-mile maybe

ld hear the sound of a man who was notching to hew . . . ably down by their barn. He tried to guess from the sound which one it was. Two blows to a notch and never an extra that would be Phorus; sometimes an extra one, that would fted, no rhyme or reason, would be one of the young fellows. e listened carefully . . . and judged this to be Fred.

Then he came out of the woods he saw that he'd been cor- Fred was squaring some white oak with an ax and an adz. s a nice piece of wood.

red, Whit soon discovered, wasn't nearly so certain as Whit that St. Clair had sold out. The way Fred had the story was the Britainer soldiers had hauled up some cannon to the f a hill that was right near by the fort and that was higher it was. The hill was so steep that nobody had figured you d get cannon up there. But they'd done it somehow—block fall, might have been—and when St. Clair had seen they d shoot right down in on top of him—well, there'd been need to pay him to pack up and get out. That was the story Phorus, so Fred said, had brought back from Sandwich an ur ago.

"What become of the men that was inside the fort?"

Well, the way Phorus had it, they'd got clear of the fort—it sn't yet light—when some dumbhead or other set afire some ilding. That woke up the Britainers, and the men had to tter.

"If there's a Britainer round who's awake, then they all got run!"

Fred said he guessed there was probably more than one itainer.

"Yes, I shouldn't wonder. I wasn't there"

Anyhow, Fred said, General St Clair had put in a good part the day trying to collect them together again, and he'd done etty well Toward evening, he'd left Colonel Seth Warner's giment, Colonel Francis' men, and Colonel Hale's crowd as a nd of rear guard on the Hubbardton road.

"General St. Clair, though, he kep' a-goin'."

"Ayuh," said Mason.

"Ayuh," said Whit.

"Well, then, the next mornin', so Phorus says, these fel was cookin' their breakfasts when the Britainers jumped and they had a fight. Colonel Hale, so they claim, took his m 'n run off. Colonel Francis got kill't, 'n three-four hundred m lost, 'n Colonel Seth Warner, who was the main one in cha he hung to it, I guess, 'bout as long as it seemed t' be any use then him 'n the rest of 'em beat it int' th' woods."

"Who'd Phorus get this from?"

"Dan'l Beede, he said."

"Then that's the way Beede heard it. You think it's

"I don' know why not."

"'*Cookin'* their breakfasts'!" Whit said it slowly and bitt —"'and the Britainers jumped 'em'! I don't wonder they d He walked around for a minute, and then he came back. "W about Indians?" he demanded of Fred

Fred seemed to take it more calmly. "They're with him, right. I guess there ain't any question. But they wan't in t fightin' on the Hubbardton road. They was still busy robbin' th fort."

"That won't last 'em forever."

"I d' know as 'twill."

"You figure Burgoyne'll keep on headin' south?"

"Sart'n to. Yes, Whit. Hudson River, he's for. They say there a road from the south end of Lake George. You know how lays, do you?"

"Yes, I been showed."

"A good many don't know. If you was to ask me, I'd say that he'd make it, too—and then maybe from there clear way down to New York."

"I don't know what's to prevent." Whit was looking abou him for something to chew.

"No, it's hard to say, now. Fort Edward is next. That's on the river. General Schuyler is there. He might do somethin'."

"Do the same as St. Clair, if he's a gen'ral, I guess."

...e he'll have to," Fred Mason said. "This Burgoyne ...is business; looks to me so."

... he's done good," Whit said over his shoulder. "It's the ... part of it sticks in my craw. I don't like that."

...o more does anyone. What can you do?"

...t had picked up a chip and was slicing a splinter off. He ...d around slowly. "Well, I don't know. I will admit it don't ...ike there's much . . ."

...d Mason assured him, "There ain't a thing, Whit. All you ...s set tight. They won't come over here And then again, ...y should come—well, you'd want t' be here"

..., I ain't sayin' I plan t' join up. What'd be the use? St. ...and this Hale— Still, all the same if Burgoyne turns loose ...ns . . ."

...er some time, it was Mason who spoke. "You used to trap, ...t you?"

...ome,—more or less" Whit wasn't thinking about it.

...hat's what your trouble is"

...What do you mean?"

...That's why you're uneasy. You think of these things bein' ...er-to than do most. A hundred mile to a trapper ain't more'n ...uple of days. Why, there's men in this town ain't been a ...dred mile their whole lives—that is to say, in a line, I mean. ...re a farmer now, boy You want to stay home. You leave ...Grants to look out for themselves. They ain't your lookout. ...r family is. I know how you feel. But you take my advice. ...how, you couldn't go now: you ain't got your hay in."

...Ayuh, I know."

...Well, then," said Fred as though the whole matter were set-...l. He stood up and picked up his ax "How's your woman ...n?"

..."She's been pretty good."

..."Ayuh. That's good. Well, now, you hold still a minute till I ...t this side done"—he prepared to cut a new notch—"'n we'll ...o up t' th' house 'n set down for a spell. I ain't seen you t' ...ith since before Town Meetin' Day."

"I got t' go back. I ain't had supper yet."

"You eat kind o' late. Must be near six o'clock."

"Her and them have had theirs."

"Yes. Gives you a chance to eat quiet, I s'pose."

"Your people all right?"

Fred said that they were, and Whit said good night.

On his way home, he couldn't see that he'd gained a th
He felt more uneasy than he had before.

3 IF PHORUS MASON could come back with that news from Sandwich, Whit was more than half tempted to try it himself. Still, he didn't feel that he ought to take the ti for the trip just for the sake of news only. His scythe blade been ground until there wasn't much left of it; it would be ti to mow before long he would go out and trade for a bla although he never would get one that would come up to his fi one—the one Karr had made for him. That was ten years

He waited four or five days, and then he went over to S wich—and he came home in the evening without any blade.

Melissa was certain before he'd said a word that this simply because he hadn't found one to suit, nor because he wa having one made: he brought nothing else with him, he hadn traded at all. She asked about Ida and Jonas, and Whit said the were well.

"Well, it's begun," he said finally. "They killed a woman Indians did. Beede told me."

She watched his face for a moment—and then she said "Where?"

"Somewheres around Ti." He turned to hang up his things "South of it, some, I guess—Gen'ral Burgoyne—wherever hi camp is. They was his Indians. She was comin' in t' th' camp t see some Britainer officer she was goin' t' get married to."

"Oh, Whit!"

Whit thought he knew what Melissa was feeling because, when he'd first heard it, he had felt the same way. Melissa was

…king about the young woman. He had got past that. "Maybe …rgoyne has found out that when you stir up hornets you can't …t with them as to who they're to bite."

Melissa said yes. But she made no effort to think what he …ant.

He sat down on the bench in front of the fireplace. He had his …k to Melissa. "I don't know why it should be any worse," he …, "that she was about to get married, but it does kind of seem …"

And again she said only "Yes."

… Whit left it.

He turned to the rest of his news. "Committee of Safety," he …, "for the Grants has sent word to New Hampshire asking …help. Gen'ral Court has gone home, but our Committee of …ety is callin' 'em back again so's they can decide. I don't know …at they can do, though."

Melissa hadn't made any effort to follow him. She said, "What …s her name, Whit?"

"Whose name? Oh—McCrea. You ever know any?"

"'McCrea' . . ." She shook her head. "No."

Whit tried again. "Grants fellers claim that if we don't send …lp to 'em, they may go under—'n then New Hampshire'll be …xt. Makes a good argument."

She said, "Why ain't it true?"

Whit was relieved. "I don't know but it would be, if it was …nly us and the Grants. But you got to figure that Bay Colony's …to it, 'n the Yorkers as well. The Grants will have asked both …f them to send help—'n I shouldn't wonder but Connecticut, …o."

"Why ain't that all the better?"

"Because the more that is into it, the less chance there is that …that will be done will be the right thing for us."

"How do you mean?"

"I mean that whatever place sees Burgoyne headed toward …hem, what they want to do is to have him headed off."

"Surely."

"Toward who?"

"Oh. Well, yes, I c'n see that."

"Why should we help," he went on, "to head him off from New York—when all it would do would be to turn him toward here? Or you think any Yorker's goin' t' try awful hard to head him off from Bay Colony? I c'n tell you they ain't!"

"Why would it be any different if it was just us and the Grants?"

"Because the Grants is between us and Gen'ral Burgoyne. He is travelin' south, down along their far side. Neither us nor the Grants wants t' have him turn east. No, we could work together all right, if it was only us and the Grants."

"Then you think we won't send any?"

"I don't know. You can't tell. But if we do send any, we want to know who is in charge. Gen'ral Schuyler—a Yorker? The men wouldn't go! Nor they wouldn't want to go, either, t' be sold out by St. Clair. You c'n be sure of this much: if we send any men—'n I ain't sayin' we won't—it'll be a New Hampshire man who'll have the say over them: he'll say when they'll fight and he will say where."

"Who do you think it'll be?"

Whit shook his head. "Gen'ral Court ain't met yet. You can't tell about them But I know who it ought t' be—and so does everyone else. So do you, for that matter. He'd be the best one. He'd be the best one they could possibly get—even if he was born over on the east bank"

"East bank . . . You mean Stark?"

"I mean Colonel John Stark. He ain't a gen'ral, 't any rate, 'n that's all t' th' good He'll be all the more for New Hampshire, the way that come about. You remember last year there—I told you about it—when the Congress was makin' new generals 'n Stark got left out . . . ?"

"You never told me"

"Well, then, maybe not. Anyhow, that's how it was. So he quit 'n come home. He figured they'd told him they didn't want him around. He is through with the Congress. He knows well

-ough now he'll never get nothin' from them. He ain't got to -en to a word that they say. He can be all for New Hampshire; -can be for New Hampshire only. I want t' tell you that's worth -ood deal. He is honest and square—or I always heard he was, -row. He knows about Indians, and he's a hard man to scare. -hey was to put him in charge, then you'd see 'em join up! -n't know but I'd—well—I think he'd be a good man."

Melissa couldn't see that it made any difference that he hadn't -it right out. She was heavy with fear . . . and she hated John -ck.

THE DAYS counted slowly to a full seven days—and no -s came Then it came all at once Hez Hackett showed up -ppearing as usual in time for Melissa to add to the pot the -le present he'd brought He said he was partial to rabbit and hoped that they were. And while they were waiting for the -bit to boil, Hackett sat in the doorway and told them the -vs.

General Schuyler had quitted Fort Edward without any fight- -; at all, but at least he had burned it—which was better than It made it look more as though he hadn't sold out, because -hey'd paid for the fort they'd have wanted it whole.

Whit made no comment—and Hackett went on.

At Thetford and Lyme on Connecticut River—that would less than halfway from here over to Ti—the women and -ldren had moved out of the houses and come over this side -cause they were afraid of attack.

Whit moved his head slightly as a sign that he'd heard.

Melissa came from the fire It was only two or three steps She -d a spoon in her hand, and it dripped onto the floor.

"You heard what happened to Exeter?" Hackett asked Whit.

"We ain't heard nothin'."

"Stark," Hackett said.

Melissa watched [illegible]t. He turned his head slowly

"Toward who?"

"Oh. Well, yes, I c'n see that."

"Why should we help," he went on, "to head him off f New York—when all it would do would be to turn him tow here? Or you think any Yorker's goin' t' try awful hard to h him off from Bay Colony? I c'n tell you they ain't!"

"Why would it be any different if it was just us and Grants?"

"Because the Grants is between us and Gen'ral Burgoyne. is travelin' south, down along their far side. Neither us nor Grants wants t' have him turn east. No, we could work togeth all right, if it was only us and the Grants."

"Then you think we won't send any?"

"I don't know. You can't tell. But if we do send any, we wa to know who is in charge. Gen'ral Schuyler—a Yorker? Th men wouldn't go! Nor they wouldn't want to go, either, t' b sold out by St. Clair. You c'n be sure of this much: if we sen any men—'n I ain't sayin' we won't—it'll be a New Hampshir man who'll have the say over them: he'll say when they'll fight nd he will say where"

"Who do you think it'll be?"

Whit shook his head. "Gen'ral Court ain't met yet. You can't tell about them But I know who it ought t' be—and so does everyone else So do you, for that matter. He'd be the best one He'd be the best one they could possibly get—even if he was born over on the east bank"

"East bank . . . You mean Stark?"

"I mean Colonel John Stark He ain't a gen'ral, 't any rate, 'n that's all t' th' good. He'll be all the more for New Hampshire, the way that come about You remember last year there—I told you about it—when the Congress was makin' new generals 'n Stark got left out . . ?"

"You never told me"

"Well, then, maybe not. Anyhow, that's how it was. So he quit 'n come home. He figured they'd told him they didn't want him around. He is through with the Congress. He knows well

had no feeling of wanting to tell her; he had no sureness she'd understand. He wanted to gather her to him, and with : to her head, try in some way to keep her from afraid.

...t they had shared things too long

I'd sooner go meet 'em than to wait for 'em here I expect can beat 'em. I expect to come back It seems t' me kind of— ll, if it's for you, in a way, I might 's well go 'n help out instead just let someone else. I ought t' be as good at it as Elkanah 'nforth."

"Do you want to go, Whit?"

"Sometimes I do, yes."

"Why?"

"Well, I ain't never been a great one for fightin', I know, but but I don't like the idea of them comin' around"

"You could look out for us better if you stayed to home."

"You'll be all right. You c'n go over to Masons', you 'n the boys, 'n come back here daytimes t' milk 'n t' feed. I shan't be gone such a great while—at least, I don't expect."

"You're set on it?"

"Yes"

It was all over, then.

"When do you want to go, Whit?"

"Three or four days—soon 's I get in some more of this hay."

"The rest of 'em ain't even started to mow."

"Then I c'n get men t' help me. I didn't want no'ne t'day."

She came and put her head down on his chest, and he put his arms round her, and she cried for a while—scarcely making a sound. Whit couldn't see that he'd done very well—he hadn't made her feel any better about his going away.

And though Melissa, for her part, knew she ought not to be crying, she had no wish at the moment to try not to cry . . .

But they couldn't stand here forever, and when, in due time, that was plain to both of them, and when it seemed to Whit that because she had quieted, she must be feeling better, he . . .

her, "Now, then, you come 'n set down. We hauled enough h for one day; we c'n let the rest go for now."

So they went and sat down by the edge of the field at a pl where the moss had come between two white ash trees. Th were not many mosquitoes; it was the last day of July.

They were aware of the stillness that lay on the field and woods . . . they saw the sun settle swiftly behind the mounta . . . and they felt the oncoming coolness that ran ahead of night . . .

The first star was showing as they went back up to the hou

Neither one of the boys seemed to have missed them at Jonas asked where they'd been, and they said they'd been hayi Jonas was making a house out of twigs on the floor, and Gow was watching him and wanting to help.

Whit was pretty sure in that moment that he'd made a m take. But he had made up his mind, he had said he would go

Three days later, he went.

. . . Melissa walked with him down through the clearing a le ways on the path as it went into the woods. Then she sa ell, I guess I'll go back now," and Whit said, "All right," a laid his rifle aside. She stepped into his arms—and he knew she kissed him that she trusted him perfectly that in going aw he was doing what he thought was right . . . and then the ha pain of leaving her took away any thoughts.

After a moment, she pushed herself from him—and she sa "Now, then, get along—you got a long ways to go." She w smiling—or trying to. "There is your rifle," she said, "there b the tree. Have a good journey—and don't forget t' come back.

Whit picked up his gun—but then he stood there in the pat because he could not turn away from her.

She had more courage than he had: she turned away . . . a he stood and watched her go from him, farther and farther, unt at a bend in the path (far enough now, she hoped, so that h could not see her face clearly) she turned and waved to him— and turned again toward the house.

her wave . . . then he swung about slowly, and
on his way.

of an hour, he was traveling smoothly and hard.
by at Beede's to get some French powder, and
said two men had already gone. Stark, so the word was,
gone to Number Four, or was going there. That would be
likeliest place, Beede thought.

said he guessed he'd try there, then—and to add the
ounces of powder onto his score. Beede said, "To hell
. What else are you shy?"

"Nothin' else I c'n think of."

"You goin' by Jonas Moore's?"

"Shouldn't wonder. I thought prob'ly I might. *What d' you* me t' carry him? I hope it's a message; I'm travelin'

"I don' know as it's anything. She was up here last night. asked me to talk to him. She thinks he's got it into his head he wants t' go, too. He ain't said nothin', but she thinks that is. She claims he ain't in shape for it."

"What do you think?"

"I know well that he ain't. He's come on pretty good from he was there in the winter. He c'n fish, 'n work round, 'n that kind o' thing. But he'd oughtn't t' travel—why, God, he'd himself."

"You want me t' talk to him?"

"Well, that might be the best. Still, he's like an old dog, you know. He see you settin' off t' go gunnin', 'n he'd feel pretty bad he couldn't go 'long. If he was a dog, you'd have t' tie him up good."

"Try to follow, you mean?"

"He *couldn't,* Whit, no. He ain't got the legs for it. He can't it all day. Look, I can show you. Noontime, it is now, or pretty close anyway. Where will you lay tonight?"

"Baker's River, perhaps."

"Forty mile from your place. And the same thing Well, it ain't more'n a week ago, Jonas was up h...

at the most from his doorstep to mine—and he was tuckered when he got here. He ain't in good shape."

"Don't sound like it, no. Well, I'll go along. I thank you the powder. I'll try t' put it to use."

"Well, if you get any Indians, I'll trade for the pelts Good and good luck—and you do as you're mind to about stopp there. I just thought I'd let you know."

"Ayuh," said Whit.

And he went down to Jonas's.

But he didn't stay long. He didn't stay to eat, even. Jon laughed at him for going off to the war. Jonas said all Whit w after was the ten-dollar bonus that Stark had said he'd pay hard money to anyone who'd join up.

Whit said he hadn't heard of it.

"The hell you ain't heard! Why don't you take Dan'l Bee along? He's a great one for money. He's worse 'n you be." A so on and so forth. It wasn't like Jonas: he talked too loud an too fast. Whit tried to joke back at him, but he didn't do well.

"And your woman," said Jonas. "A fine way t' treat her! Leav do all the work while you go traipsin' off! You expect t' fi there, do you, when you come home again? You're takin' risk, Whit. Maybe you'd ought t' go back."

Whit said, "I guess she'll be there. You been off yourself, ain' you?—now 'n again? If a woman 'd wait for a husband like you I d' know but my chances ought t' be pretty good."

Ida Moore asked him, "Whit, she there alone?"

"No, only daytimes. She'll lay to Masons', I guess, mostly nights That is—well, you know, if more stories come in."

Whit said he must go now.

They didn't press him to stay because they could see he wanted to go. Ida Moore said, "I was goin' t' say you might stay longer here on your way back, but I guess that on your way back you prob'ly won't want t' stop."

Whit said he'd stop, all right.

Jonas stood up. "Come on," he said, "I'll go with you a piece. I wouldn't want t' give any offense."

For a quarter mile, maybe, they talked about hay—though it wasn't their custom to talk in the woods, and neither man, really, had much to say about hay. Jonas cursed and swore more than Whit had ever noticed him to.

Then at the top of a ridge, Jonas stopped and said quietly, "I'll go back, now."

"All right, then, Jonas. And I take it kindly that you come this far. There wan't any need."

Jonas paid no attention. He was looking just past Whit's head. "Reason you're goin' alone, my legs ain't any good. I would be a drag on you. I couldn't keep up. It's because I was sick and because I am old."

The truth of what he was saying was in Jonas's face. Whit didn't say anything—not one single word.

Jonas spoke evenly. "If you don't come back, we'll keep an eye on your woman—I guess you know that—Ida 'n me will, as long as we live. Well—I got t' go back now"—and before Whit could speak, Jonas had turned and was off down the hill.

Whit watched him going. Downhill looked to be hard for him . . .

Then Whit swung about and headed into the west.

THIS WAS the first time he had taken this road. Once he was free of the settlement, the cart tracks became dim, but he could still make them out with no trouble at all, and he had the spots on the trees, and the path was trodden some, too. It was pretty fair going—not as good as a pine plain, but still not rocky nor steep, and generally speaking the footing was good. There was nothing to check him from going as fast as he liked.

For the better part of an hour, the path held to the west; then it swung to the south round the base of a hill and kept south for a time until he stood at a forks. The way to the left would take him still farther south along the shore of the pond and he'd have picked up Squam Brook. Follow that down, and he'd

Merrimack River not very far south of where he wanted to g That was the way he and Melissa had come. If he were to go th way now he'd pass right by the place where they'd overset th time. He grinned as he thought of it, and he wiped the swe from his eyes. It had been as cold that night as it was hot in he now! He'd like to go by there—and to tell Melissa he'd seen i He'd like to see if the bank there really was a hundred feet hig But it would be a longer way round, and he didn't suppose h ought to spare the time to it. He wiped his forehead once mo —and took the path to the right . . . and it went straight up for a good, solid mile . . . until it began to pull at his wind an to bother the backs of his legs. But he hung to it all right—unt the rise of it slackened, and then it leveled off for a moment an began dropping down.

He was running well now, and as his head cleared after th climbing, he was pleased with himself· he might not be as goo s he was eight or ten years ago, but he could still run the woods 'd undertake to stay with most farmers close to thirty yea

It would be downhill now, on an average, until he came to the river. If he'd had a load on his back, downhill wouldn't have helped him, but as it was he didn't suppose he had twenty-five pounds—that would be counting everything: spare clothing and food, gun, powder, and lead, his knife and his belt, and the things for his gun, as well as what he was wearing—light leather pants and old hunting shirt. In his food satchel, besides corn and salt pork, he had a pair of good-looking moccasins, his best linen shirt, and all that was left of a hat. The hat was an afterthought; he'd brought it along on the chance that he might be tricked somehow into having to fight with the sun in his eyes. The linen shirt he would need if it should turn cold or wet, and it would be a handy thing, too, if he should chance to get hurt. The hair ribbon and moccasins were in case he had to dress himself out.

The other things that he carried all had to do with his gun. The last thing before leaving, he'd taken them out of the bag and

them over just as he always did . . . frizzen pick, file, flints, and so on . . . they came to fourteen in all.

thought some of bringing a water bottle along, but he had carried one, and so he'd decided not to this time.

of these things were slung over his shoulders—that is, and his bullet pouch and the two powderhorns. Only his was hitched onto his belt. He had a thong round his to keep these things more secure, and the way he could his running was smooth was by whether his bag bounce and flap at his side. It did a little—but not very h.

e was enjoying it now; he felt pretty good. Going as fast as as, he didn't get much chance to think about where he was g or why he was here. He had to keep his mind on the path. very often would there come a stretch where for a dozen in a row he could put his foot down without picking the .

he times when he stopped were when he could see out und: he had to keep the country in mind as well as marking path

It was past midafternoon when, because it was flat, he could he was approaching the river . . and he came out on the nk with the sun three hours high.

The river was wide here, sandy bottomed, and brown. Over ross was where Baker's River came in The ford from here er was marked out with stakes The river was down. It didn't ok like a hard river to cross Peeling his shirt off and stepping t of his breeches, he wrapped them both round the gun and und them tight with his belt. Then he stepped into the water -which was as warm as Conway pond.

Halfway across, it came to him that if there *were* any Indians d come this far east, they would never get a better shot at a an than he was giving them now. What they'd probably do ough, would be to wait till he came out on the bank, so hen he fell, his gun and his other things wouldn't ge

possibility began to seem real to him. And though most a river will turn out to be deeper than it looks from the bank, t fool river had places where it didn't come up to his knees . . . a his skin was so white! Well, if he was shot now, he deserved —there was no question of that.

When he recollected that both his gun and his knife w tied so he couldn't get at them—then he was suddenly scar He was scared enough so that he wanted to run. But the wa was too deep to run in and the bottom was soft. He could have run a single step if he'd tried. And then he did try—just see if he could—and he almost fell down, and terror came him as it does in a dream.

. . . when he was free of the water, he stumbled a few ste up the beach and crawled in under the bank amongst the ro and the spiderwebs and lay there and listened—and the m quitoes came . but there was no other sound

Ten minutes later, he was again on the path. But it was a go hour or more before he began to feel like himself.

And he must now carry with him these things: first, that h was liable to find any minute that he'd done something foolis it was too late to mend, and second, that fear was close to him— more so than he'd thought.

At his regular suppertime, he stopped and sat down, and h opened his satchel—but his stomach didn't feel hungry, and h got up and went on.

By sundown he was tired, and he turned aside from the pat to look for some place to sleep.

He found a good place about a half a mile from the path where there was an old hemlock blowdown, as dry as a bone with the top of it tight up against the face of a rock. Not even a bird could get in under there without making a noise. And it was a place where no one would come anyway.

He took off his shirt and put his linen shirt on underneath it ate his supper in comfort, and then crawled in and lay down. He was tired and safe, and he didn't want to think about anything . . . Sleep came over him quickly and stayed with him all night

was a good sleep, but not as deep as it might have been in his ...—and from time to time he'd wake up enough to know ...e he was. . . . He took an extra hour of sleep after it began ...ow gray in the morning.

...e stiffness and lameness he had when he stood up would ...k off as soon as he got going again.

...e first part of the morning he would follow up Baker's ...t through Rumney township and Wentworth, it might be ...n miles. Then he'd cross a height of land somewhere, and ...own to the Connecticut River through Orford—and there ...ould get his first look at the Grants.

...n the first couple of hours, he passed a half dozen houses, but ...n then on they were scarce—it was hilly and rough. It was ...g in here somewhere that John Stark had been taken—thirty ...s ago, that was, when there were no people at all. And it was ... better country to hunt in than it was for anything else . . . ... that was about all you could say for it for a good twenty ...es. Then he came to a farm and beyond was the river: he had ...shed his westing Now he would turn south.

For two hours he passed one farm after another. This was no ...lderness, this was all taken up And on the west bank of the ...er—when he could catch a glimpse of it—it looked to be even ...ore settled than it was on this side It was beautiful land, there ...as no question about it—a strip on each side of the river that ...s of uncertain width but that in a good many places was as ...t as the ice on a pond It was flatter than Fryeburg—or as flat, ...nyhow. And the soil must be the best They had natural mead...ws with rich-looking hay, and they had Indian corn that was as ...igh as a man. If the whole of the Grants, he thought, was like ...hat little part over there, there must be no country to equal it ...nywhere in the world.

A few minutes later, he met a man riding a horse—he hadn't seen that since he didn't know when.

Overtaking a farmer, and feeling ready to talk, Whit gave him greeting and told him his name.

"'Livingston,' eh? That might be a Scots name." He was

older man, square-built and blue-eyed, and his short beard most white. "My name is Hamilton. I live down the road. Y say you're of Tamworth? I know where it is. Where are y for?"

"Number Four. Colonel Stark."

"I've a boy is with Warner. You'll stop with us for tea."

Whit said he didn't mind.

... but when he saw the house—with a fence round the do yard, and painted pure white—and with glass in the windows he was glad of the moccasins he had in his bag, and he ask leave to wash at the well before going in.

Hamilton brought him a basin and a dish of soft soap, a pie of coarse linen, and left him alone. When Whit was done was ing, he put his linen shirt on, his moccasins, and his hair ribb He felt a long way from home. Then he picked up his rifle a went toward the house. It seemed a good deal of fuss fo saucer of tea. He didn't care much for tea, and he was hung besides.

Hamilton's wife—a tall and gaunt woman—put him in min of Mistress Jennifer Gowan. And then he saw the table...

He hadn't eaten since sunup, and he must have come fift miles They had more things on that table than he could hav named.

He stayed the night there, and he slept in a bed He couldn't help thinking, as he climbed into the bed, that so far he was doing pretty well in this war.

He was on the road early next morning—but so full of break-fast that a moderate walk was the best he could do. This was the township of Lyme. He approved of it. It was to this place, two weeks ago he had heard, that some people had crossed who were afraid of attack. Well, they had showed their good sense, fears or no fears—and he smiled to himself and his belly felt good. Number Four, they had told him, was sixty miles south. He had in mind to keep going until he got there.

The names of the towns he crossed during the day were Hanover, Lebanon, Plainfield, and Cornish, the township of Claremont... and at seven o'clock he had made Number Four.

But there were no soldiers gathered in front of the tavern; there was no sign of Colonel John Stark.

Tired and hungry, he went into the tavern. He called for his supper—after telling his *name—and then he sat down and* ate alone, asking no questions, not talking with anyone. He learned from listening that Stark had gone to Manchester; he didn't know even where Manchester was.

When he rang down the money to pay for his supper, the landlord came over and asked if he wanted a bed. Whit didn't like his looks much. he was a fat little man who kept rubbing his hands. Whit said, "No, I don't think it. Where does Manchester lie?"

"Over the river and west twenty-five miles. You ain't goin' tonight, are you?"

"Not all the way."

"You come quite a ways?"

"Orford, this morning"

"God, you done well. Fifty mile, ain't it?"

"I didn't count 'em. Might be, I guess."

"You'd be a hunter, I take it."

"I'll be a soldier tomorrow, if I can catch up with Stark."

"I knowed you wan't a militiaman."

"You seen more of them than you have hunters, I guess."

"By Jesus, yes God, this place has been thick with 'em—all headin' west They been comin' through here from clear east of the Merrimack—Chester, and Nottingham, all of them towns. Exeter, even."

"I shouldn't wonder."

"Oh, he won't lack for men. *From the river towns, too:* Goffstown, 'n Kettleford, 'n Hooksett, 'n them. When John Stark gives a holler, I want t' *tell you, they come.*"

"Kettleford?"

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want to hang back. Twelve hundred men in one place was than he'd ever seen in his life. . . .

he went down in amongst them and wandered about— 't more alone than he ever had in the woods To see that faces—and none that he knew—it was a strange thing. He know what he'd expected, but he knew this wasn't it. And and he was looking for the Kettleford men. . . .

en he'd think of a man a little ways off, "There, that looks someone that I used to know." But when he'd see the man's then he'd know he was wrong.

he went through the camp He had forgotten John Stark. anted to come on somebody he knew.

any looked up at him—and a few of them spoke.

ost of the men in the camp were just lying about—some of talking, and not many were drunk. Here and there at a there'd be a man cooking meat. And he saw a good many sleeping. Most of the guns that he saw were smoothbores. men were all ages· there were quite a few boys—and there some men who were older than Jonas Moore was—but had probably come from near by.

He didn't see many hunting shirts, the men were in waist- ts and shirt sleeves as they would have been for work. Not a iform anywhere—although he did see an officer wearing his h.

Those men who were moving about were either bringing in od, were bent on some errand, or were just looking round— o or three at a time, they were strolling about, looking this ay and that, taking everything in They were strangers, as Whit as.

A boy came up to Whit and asked if he knew where the Ep- ing men were Whit said, no, he couldn't say. Whit would ave said something more, but the boy turned away . . . and as Whit started on again, he saw Ensign Lord coming straight oward him. Lord looked up and saw Whit—and for an ins. was puzzled, and then broke into a smile, and said, "W ou come from?"

"Same place as you did—some time ago."

Ensign said, "Whit, you look good."

"I been all right." It seemed to Whit that Lord's face had changed a great deal. He enjoyed looking on it. "How ha things been?"

"Pretty good, Whit. I'm single and healthy, though I ai very rich. You?"

"We been all right. There's four of us now."

"Well, I'll be damned."

"How's Mr. Gowan?"

"He's in good health. Whit, how long you been here?"

"I just got in."

"You with a comp'ny?"

"No, I come alone."

"You want t' join a good comp'ny?"

"Well, I don' know, Ensign. I figured I just stay arour the fightin' was over, and then I'd go home. I still got the be part of my hay to get in."

"So has everyone else. They all feel the same way. But yo ... to join up with someone to get your ten dollars. Come alon with me, will you? We're just over here."

Whit didn't budge. "Who is captain?" he asked.

"Oh, we got a good captain. We got the best one around. W got about the best captain that we ever had—if I do say so."

Whit let his pleasure show in his face.

"Better'n Butler?"

"We-ell—I would say yes."

"Whereabouts is your pitch?"

Lord led the way. "There is one or two there you'll remember," he said, "though we have got some that wan't long out of dresses time you went away You say you got two young ones—?"

"Two is all, yes Boys, they are—both of 'em."

"Well, you're ahead of me, anyhow."

They wound their way between the cook-fires and among the men whom Whit no longer noticed—and although Lord told him as they walked along that Col ... was not here ye

was still expected today, it didn't sound important to

hat was wondering what men he would see in a minute or
that he used to know. He was wondering what they would
of him . . . whether they'd see that he had come on, or
her it would be the same way it had been before. It began
m more and more as though it would be the way it had
before. These men would know nothing of his oxen and
They would see only himself.
d almost aloud he said, "Well, that's all right."
and then they came to a little group clustered tight round
six or eight men standing close to each other, watching,
heads bent, something going on in their midst. They had
backs to Lord and to Whit.
rd said to them clearly, "I got a recruit"—and they twisted
heads round and then stood apart. . . .
an old leather apron—a pair of tongs in one hand—Joe
e stood there, staring at Whit. He stood in back of a little
ll forge
be Felipe's eyes got bigger and bigger. He muttered some-
ng, and he crossed himself.
Whit watched him, and waited
The fright that had been in Joe's face began to disappear
m it, and Joe—from behind his big mustache—appeared to
trying to smile
Whit met him halfway with it—or at least he thought he did.
And Joe whispered in Portygee, and then said, "I t'ought you
s a ghost!"
He looked funny to Whit "No, Joe, you missed." But Joe
ln't get it. And Whit said, "You're still smithin', I see."
Joe nodded—but Whit wasn't sure whether Joe had under-
od him or not.
"He surprised you, eh, Joe?"—that was Lord speaking.
Joe turned his head. "Aye, captain," he said.
And Whit saw the little red hair ribbon. He saw it was
fow almost to pink.

7 WHIT WAS sitting with his back and his head leaned against the rough trunk of a big red oak tree. He was feel hopeless and sick. In a few minutes now the fighting would s His stomach and bowels were troubled and sore, he ached in joints, and his head seemed to sway. John Stark and Indi Melissa at home, Britainers, Hessians, the cool of his house, the weight of his rifle as it lay in his lap, these were the th that went through his head There were other men round h they were all waiting, too. Whit guessed it must be now ab halfway from noon until darkness—but they'd have the fi ing, all right, there was plenty of time. There were four or hours before darkness would come.

They would have had the fighting yesterday—but then it rained. Today it was bright. It had been hot all the morning was hotter still, now. Even here in the shade, the air that breathed was thin and uncomforting. It would not rain too

It was over a week now since he'd come into the camp Manchester. He hadn't joined up finally—but no one seemed care. He had marched with the rest of them from Manchester Bennington, and then a few miles westward to this place. He one of them now. Stark was around here—oh, yes, he was he all right! And the Britainers, Indians, Hessians, and Brunswi ers, their cannon and muskets—and their long bayonets—th were all waiting, they were all ready—they were on top of steep hill over across a small stream. Burgoyne wasn't wi them. Colonel Baum—Bum—was their head man in charg They had a good place. They were on top of a hill. Whit an these other men round here—as soon as Stark gave the word would go down and cross over the stream and try to get up th hill, and when they got to the top of it, then there'd be the fighting.

Whit knew what Stark was waiting for now—and it couldn't take much longer. Stark had sent other men to go the long wa around and come up from in back, on the far side of that hill. When they were there, they would start firing. It was only that sound that Stark was waiting for now. Whit would hear it him

would strike hard on his ears—and he would get up and th the rest.

A long time this morning, Whit and a hundred other men marched round and round a small knoll in the sun. As they round the far side of it, they were shot at—but mostly cannon, and nobody got hit.

one except Stark had any faith in the trick. And Stark himself that he didn't know as it would fool anybody but Still, he did order Joe Felipe out of the line. He said, "Even dum would recognize your shape if he was to see you twice minutes. I guess you better stay out."

Whit had felt worse and worse all the time they were march- At first, he'd thought it might be the sun and he'd put on hat. He thought now that most likely he had eaten bad meat. Lord came up and spoke to him. "Whit, you look kind of ked. Don't you feel right?"

Whit opened his eyes, and the light struck against them. He d, "I feel all right"

"Well, by God, you don't look it, boy! You think you can ht?"

"I shouldn't wonder I figured to try I might get kind of nely if I was to set around here"

Lord said, "If you got a sickness, you better stay here." He as distressed . . . he kept looking at Whit

Then there was suddenly with them the far sound of the uskets—uneven, many—from behind the high hill.

Lord looked annoyed—as though they'd picked a poor time or it.

Whit put a hand back on the tree trunk to try to get up— nd then took Lord's hand and was pulled up onto his feet.

"How about it?" Lord asked.

Whit said, "All right"

Lord turned away to shout to the men.

Whit simply stood there—but anyhow, he was standing; he could do that much. . . .

Stark spoke to the men.

They gave a great shout and began moving off—cursing happy,—or it seemed so to Whit.

Whit followed them—running and stumbling . . . but far behind.

. . . he had fixed his eyes on Joe's hair ribbon and was following that.

It seemed to Whit strange that he could keep going at There was nothing holding him up, no strength in his legs he couldn't see anything—except that little pink hair rib swimming and bobbing in front of his eyes. That held somehow. If he were to lose hold on that he would fall on face.

He was aware for a moment that he was wading a stream.

Sometime after that, his weakness won over him. he down on all fours, he was retching and sick.

He heard the roar of a volley just up ahead of him.

Someone crawled back to him and said, "You been h Whit shook his head and said, "No," but he didn't see who was.

When he began to feel better, he raised his head look round. Forty feet up the hill from him, he could see of the men They were lying down, kneeling, or standing in b of some tree. All of them were loading.

Whit watched them curiously. . . .

Then on top of the hill, he saw one of the cannon go off much nearer, much louder than it had been this morning was the battle.

Up there on the hill, coming out of the smoke—but not co ing toward him, going off to one side—he saw an Indian. was a perfect Indian, too—half naked and painted, mo along, carrying his gun at one side. In his other hand, he had cowbell. There was another Indian following him. The fi Indian was ringing the cowbell as he trotted along A third followed them—and another—another . . . there came a line of them. They were all hollering mournfully—Whit cou

them as plain! . . . and then the last one disappeared round
side of the hill. There had been a hundred or more of them—
ty that.
was a strange thing to have seen. But that was just what he

hit sat back on his heels, and then got up onto his feet. He
lot better! . . . and he clambered up the steep hill to join
men just in front.
e first man he came to was a man lying down He turned
ad and looked up at Whit—and said, "For Chris' sakes, get
"

hit knelt beside him—and watched the man cuddle his
to his gun, aim . . . and then fire—peer ahead for an in-
—and he turned round to Whit. "I got him!" he said,
ght 'tween the two eyes!"
retty good shooting."
You're God damn right it's good shooting!" Then he looked
t at Whit "What's the matter with you? Ain't you goin' t'
n this?"
s'pose I might 's well" He lay down on his belly and
ight his gun round He was all loaded—he had been [illegible]
h. But he wasn't primed. He put his powder flask up to his
h, pulled out the stopper, and poured some in the pan,
What is that—a twist gun?" the other man asked.
Uh huh."
Thought it might be, from the length of the barrel."
Whit had her all primed now He settled himself and drew
k the hammer He was searching the smoke up on top of the
l. He wished he could see better; his head wasn't real clear.
e said, "What I come after was Indians. You see any now?"
"I guess they went home. That's the trouble with volleys [illegible]
ed one volley, 'n them Indians beat it while we was all [illegible]
adin' 'n nobody could shoot So now it's 'fire at will' [illegible]
hould a been t' begin with. Well, we hadn't ought to [illegible]
rgets for a little while yet. Them Hessians or [illegible]

whatever they be show up better to shoot at than Indians. There—I guess I'm ready again." He had finished his loadi and now he lay beside Whit and they watched the hilltop.

"What held you back?" the other man asked.

"Sick to my stomach. I had to stop."

"Thought that was it. You all right again now?"

"Ayuh."

"Good. They're down in that ditch," he explained, "that t was diggin' there yesterday. You hold still for a minute 'n the all raise up to once to let off a volley 'n then you c'n get one Y got t' fire 'fore they do, but you'll have plenty of time O they have fired, they scrooch down again."

The cannon went off. Whit was used to it now.

"Here they come!"

Over his front sight, Whit saw them raise up—orderly, ular—but dim through the smoke . . . and he saw their musk come up Now they would aim . . . but their heads didn't down He couldn't understand that—and he was so taken with seeing what they would do next that he forgot what hould have been doing himself.

The man next to him fired, and Whit was annoyed because t flash and smoke from his musket made it harder to see H raised up above it—and he was in time to see the flame of th firing run down the line—the smoke billowed out—and the was the jagged, rattling roar—and he heard the wha-a-ang the balls fade in back of his head. That sound woke him u They had fired at him! His left knee swung forward and was rest for his elbow, his head bent to his gunstock—and throu a break in the smoke he saw a man's shoulder—he swung h sights onto it . . and squeezed off as the bead came down in the notch. He knew he had hit him. He couldn't actually s because of the smoke from his gun. But he was certain enoug

They wanted to shoot, did they? All right, then, let's shoo He reached round for his pouch and threw a half dozen bull into his mouth, opened his patch box and took out some of the

folded them into his fingers—and was loading as smoothly swiftly as he ever had in his life.

This was between him and the men up there on the hill. They shot at him: he had heard the whang of the musketballs to his ears. They had shot at him—now he would shoot

He had forgotten the man who lay on the ground next to he had no thought for the other men round—

He talked to his rifle. "They want to shoot, do they? Them and smoothbores! All right, then, you show 'em. You remember old Captain Karr, don't you?—that you used to belong He may be dead, but he's got his eye on you. So you better it good, or I'll bust you over a rock." This was while he was ...ng. . . .

And as he thrust home the ramrod, "Now, then, let's see you it!"—and he laid the ramrod aside, and he wriggled about his belly to get himself set—and he peered through the smoke ing to pick out a mark . . He passed up an officer who had y a sword. He was trying for the men who were trying for n.

The next volley was closer Two yards to his right a ball struck o the ground—and the whining sound of others passing made n half close his eyes

They don't do so bad," said the man on his left, "seein' they n't appear t' aim any. I'm goin' t' move up a mite." Bent over d running, he went a little way up the hill, and settled down eways behind a beech tree.

Whit made up his mind to do the same thing . . . and when next volley had missed him, he started out and kept going til he saw a pretty good rock that nobody was using, and he ot down behind that

He had forgotten his ramrod

—and for the first time he swore.

And he started back after it.

A man rose up in front of him, barring his way. He was

and angry. He was an officer—by his sword and his sash said, "Get back in there, damn you"—and drew back his sw

Whit was wholly disgusted. He spat to one side, and rubbed his forefinger under his nose. "I'm after my ramro down there a step. You want to go fetch it for me? I c'n wai you here."

"Your what?"

"Ramrod."

"Where is it?"

"Down there."

"Well, then, go get it! Good God, what a fool!" He tu away.

Whit slid down the hill on his heels, picked up the ram and got back to his rock.

He stayed here a long time. It was a gray rock, and smoot his hand, about two feet high at one end, and sloping off tight. From the way it went into the ground—not straight and down, but on more of a slant—it was probably the tip boulder. The soil at the base of it was yellow and soft—not coarse gravel that a granite rock has. These things were differ from what they were at home.

This was a good rock; it was a good place to be.

There were plenty of other men round him, but he felt alo It would take a cannonball, probably, to knock this rock loo Stretched out in back of it, with his feet down the hill, he turn on his side when he wanted to load. And there was enough pitc to the hill so that, when he poured, the powder went down right—he didn't have to raise up. It was as good a place fight from as there was on the hill.

There was nothing to hurry him, and he took his time. A littl crack in the rock on the sloping right side he used for a rest. N one could say it wasn't steady, at any rate—and it was a pret good height. The thing that bothered him most was that he kept slipping downhill inside of his clothes. It made his breeches bind in the crotch.

He was scared all the time, and he knew that he was, but he

n't really bad off. There had been one or two hit: one man off his right, who had flopped around just at first but since then lain still, and another man more to his left and a little ways the hill. Whit didn't know who they had been. He hadn't Lord—and he didn't know where Joe was.

As for his shooting, he thought he'd done pretty well. Sometimes, of course, he had missed—or he was pretty certain he had. But he figured he had got six of them, and maybe two more. Had got two through the head.

This was a strange thing for him to be doing. But there was no need to think about that. Off and on, he did wonder, though, how long this was supposed to keep up. He was getting wonderful dry!—his tongue was thickened and foul. And his gun needed swabbing—that was the worst. He knew there was a spring away around to his left. More and more he was thinking that pretty soon he'd go there. He'd got to have water. He would go pretty soon. He could feel how the water would taste in his mouth.

He had decided to go—but he'd got to load first . . . and for the first time, he had trouble. He was uncertain and trembling, though his hands shook—and while he was pouring the powder, he stared and was frightened to see that he was spilling the powder all over the place. So he stopped pouring.

Then he couldn't remember what he was supposed to do next . . .

He tried hard to remember. He tried as hard as he could. But he had to give it up finally because there was no chance.

The thing to do, so he reasoned, was to leave the gun here. It was no good to him now because he didn't know how to use it. Captain Karr had shown him how to use it—back there in the smithy. But that was a long time ago. He would just leave it here. There was nothing else he could do.

He was pleased at the way he had thought this all out. It was as clear as could be: lay down the rifle—and then go get the water.

He found he was glad he didn't have to shoot any more.

He started to lay down his rifle, and while he was do

he winced all of a sudden and shrank into himself because so thing was going to hit him. And he was aware of a kind growling and then a great bursting roar mounting into the a and he could feel the earth shaking.

Gripping his rifle, he jumped to his feet, looking first around him, and then up to the top of the hill—where a b white cloud of smoke was getting bigger and higher.

A man stood up not far away from him and shouted, "Th their amminition! We got 'em now!"—and he began scramb and clawing his way up the hill.

Other men—all over—the place was thick with them moving forward—yelling and shouting—"Here we go, boy Here we go!—Here we go—" Whit had to go with them started forward—he was going uphill with the rest of them kinds of shouting—"By Jesus, we got 'em!"—and a good m just hollering. Whit had his rifle tight in his hand.

The cannon went off and it was pretty close to them. Nob minded. They didn't holler so much. But they kept a-going. They were at the top of the hill now. It wasn't so steep. W ed up to see what was ahead. He saw it—a banked ace made of fresh earth and logs, not very high, and beh that were the Hessians—they stood in line, they held their gu very even and steady; they all had bayonets. Whit didn't try look at their faces. It was the bayonets that lay ahead now.

He saw Joe Felipe, from among the men just in front of hi go up the bank, swing his musket down like a club—and jum down in amongst them.

Whit followed Joe—he came right in after him. Joe had n gun now. He was bent down and in close. He was working hi knife—coming up with it from low on his right.

Two Hessians, side by side, lifted their muskets to thrus down into Joe's back. Joe took the one on the right, going u under the bayonet—and Whit poked his gun muzzle for th other one's face, pulled the trigger—missed fire—and the jammed the bare muzzle on into the face. The man let go hi gun and clapped his hands to his face—and as Joe's man wen

...g, Joe was in on this second one, and struck three times with ...knife deep into the neck. Whit was afraid Joe would break ...blade off.

Whit turned his rifle end over end, and drove with the butt of ...for the nearest face that he saw. And again Joe stepped in ...t of him, still swinging that knife.

Whit turned to his left—saw a thrust coming that he couldn't ...—ducked clear—and fell down. He rolled for the jack boots ...he man who'd tried for him, got his arm around one and ...ered the other one in—and felt his man coming down. Whit ...hed for his knife—and then his head seemed to explode ... ... he knew he'd lost his hold, and he couldn't see anything. ...was lying face down. He pushed with his hands and got up ...o his knees. He got his eyes open, but everything swam so— ...he seemed to be swaying and sinking as he would in a swing. ...shut his eyes, and tried to get to his feet—and he made it He ...od up on his feet. He had his eyes closed, and he wanted to ...down again But he opened his eyes—and though he couldn't ... far, he made out pretty soon that he stood alone. He stood ...the ditch up on top of the hill There were plenty of other ...n near him, but there were none standing up. They were lying ...s way and that. They were mostly all dead But some of them ...re not. He saw two sitting up.

Empty-handed, uncertain, Whit stood and looked round—a ...eat pain in his head He couldn't stand up much longer, he ...ould have to sit down—

... there was a man coming toward him; he was close to him ...w, he was right in front of him—

Whit looked on his face, and knew who he was: that was ...e Felipe's face. Whit could see Joe was asking him something, ...t there didn't seem to be any way for Whit to tell what it was, ...d he didn't feel like the effort to recall any words. But he felt ...endly toward Joe, and he smiled.

Joe's face got very big and came so close up to Whit's eyes that Joe's nose almost touched him ... and then Joe's face drew away and got very small. Whit saw these things; he ...

A doctor came one day. Whit was helpless, of course, and h
didn't know what would happen. But it turned out all right. A
the doctor did was to talk for a minute or two—asked Wh
about his place and so on—and then for no reason he showe
Whit a fishhook he claimed to have fashioned himself—holdin
it right up close to Whit's eyes and moving it this way and tha
Whit thought it looked to be a fair enough fishhook—excep
the barb was too long. He said, "You got to set that hook har
for that barb to take hold."

The doctor laughed and stood up, and said, "I guess you'l
fish again."

And Whit said, "I had figured to"—and the doctor laughe
again and went out.

—he had had an odd smell to him, Whit didn't know wha
it was.

The old woman made him take physic that night. Whit ha
never felt in his life about anyone as he did about her. He kne
she was trying to help him, and that made it worse. No on
uld have been so bound and determined to work a man harm
at terrible woman was to do him some good. He wanted to
ell, and he longed to go home. But the first thing he wante
was to get away from her face.

They got him up in a chair after what they said was a
week, and the old man brought him his rifle and put i
hands—but Whit didn't feel any interest in it, and

At the end of another four days that took twice
week, he could walk about pretty well. It jarred hi
if he came down on his heels, and it hurt him to
this was so, and they loaded him down with
that sloshed about in him and put no strength
wanted wild meat—whether he could chew
liver, he wanted Or even honest fried pork—
streaks of lean in it—he wouldn't have to c
way Melissa would cook it, it would melt in

He told them next morning that he'd got to go home.

They put up quite an argument, and the old woman threated to go get the doctor again.

But Whit felt so good just at the prospect of leaving that he d, "All right, you go get him. I'll take him along."

She was truly distressed, though. And that made him feel bad. t he knew now that she never would touch him again. Still, e wouldn't give in—and it was the old man brought his things r him.

Whit put them on. They felt heavy, of course, but they felt etty good, his powderhorns and his bag. He was missing his t and his knife, but he said nothing of that.

She tried to get him to wait while she fixed him some soup take with him. But Whit wouldn't have waited for anything w. If he could get only a half a mile from the house—and then down by the road—he would be on his way home.

He thanked them both, and he meant it—he meant every rd. And when he told the woman his thanks, he spoke straight her face . and he knew while he spoke he was grateful, and e hoped she knew it, too.

She cut him short, though. She just nodded her head and went ut of the room.

The old man went with him a little piece up the road.

He said, "I wish't you wouldn't go. You ain't in no kind of shape."

"I'll pick up on the road. I got t' get home."

Not for an instant convinced, the old man merely nodded—as much as to say there was no use his trying further. Then he suddenly lifted his head, and said—not looking at Whit, "Wait! I forgot—" and started back to the house. He turned and called back to Whit, "You stay right still—I'm comin' right back."

Whit stood by the gate, thinking that all this waiting round was using up strength that he was going to need on the road.

Then the old man was back again. He held his hand toward Whit—and across that dry, wrinkled hand

fingers curved up, there lay a slender, sharp-pointed knife. Wh
stared at it—and knew it: that was Joe Felipe's knife.

"Where'd you get that?"

"That captain," the man said, "time he come t' see you. H left it then for you—and then I forgot. I meant t' clean her u too, for you—but I guess you c'n do that. You got a whetsto I seen, in your bag. That there's quite a knife. Kind a narr perhaps, but it's awful good steel. B'longed to a friend o' your he said. He didn't say who."

"All right," said Whit. "Thank you." He picked up the kni and slid it into his sheath. He looked up at the man. "Well— good-by. I thank you—and her—like I said before."

"You're more'n welcome. Good-by to you. If you get a goo chance to, let us hear you got home."

Whit said, "Ayuh, I will."

"Good luck to you"—and he saw that he'd got to be the o to turn away first—and he nodded and smiled—and he turne away. He started off up the Manchester road.

The old man called after him, "I hope you find that you man is well!"

Whit wished he'd let go. He turned and waved back and called, "I guess I will"—and that hurt his head. Then he faced to the road again—keeping his eyes on a bend up ahead. If he could get round that bend, he would feel safe.

Although he got round the bend all right, he then had a strong wish to look back over his shoulder—just so as to know that they weren't on his track. But he knew this would be foolish, and so he held on. He'd got to keep his head now. He had a long way to go.

After a little, the road crossed a stream. They had put a good heavy bridge over it, and a stout railing, to boot. They had used sticks of ash for the railings, some of the bark was still on. He set down his rifle, and leaning his elbows on the railing to rest, he looked up the stream, watching the slow-turning eddies. . . .

. . Slowly, he reached his hand round to his sheath—and drew out Joe Felipe's knife. He took hold of the point between his

mb and forefinger, raised it over his shoulder, and flipped it l up the stream.

Then he picked up his rifle, and started again up the road. He s on his way home.

SEVENTEEN DAYS, by road, river, and path . . . and he e in the evening to Jonas Moore's house.

There was no one about—not even the dog.

Whit went into the house. The fire was low, but it hadn't en banked, and Jonas' gun was up on its pegs. They'd be back fore long. He stood his gun in the corner, and went across to e fireplace to put on a stick. It was getting cold out. The pot d been swung aside from the fire, and he looked down into it . . . and it appeared to have some kind of stew in it. That s an interesting thing. It looked to be venison stew . . . and he it in his finger and stirred it about . . . there was venison in it, l right!—and other things, too . . .

In twenty minutes or less, he was stretched out by the fire, nd full of a warm and rich venison stew It had had an herb in t he'd never tasted before And he didn't know now what it as. . . .

Sleep was coming fast toward him—and he let it come . . .

e'd surely wake up at the sound of Jonas's voice. . . .

He'd surely wake up at the sound of Jonas's voice. . . .

Fifteen miles today That was the best day he'd had. . . . He as pretty near home now . He had pretty near won. . . .

He would be home tomorrow.

Tomorrow night he would lie with Melissa beside him. All night.

One of the sticks settled down in the fire. He opened one eye just a crack—and closed it again. There was not now any pain in his head. This was Jonas's house that was all around him, the floor that he lay on, the walls, and the roof . . . it was fami" and friendly . . .

Tomorrow night, home.

It was gray daylight when he wakened next morning after long, solid sleep—and outside there was rain . . . well, he woul go on today in spite of the rain.

Mrs. Moore was moving about at the other end of the root. Jonas, most likely was out in the barn.

Whit said to her, "Mornin' "—and threw back the fur cov ering that one of them had put over him sometime while h slept. It was getting cold now, they were into the fall. The mer had gone—and he'd not seen it go.

"Mornin'," Ida Moore answered. "Well, you slept prett good."

"Reason I slept good," getting up onto his feet, "was I'd most of your supper. Set so good on my stummick, my cos science slept, too. Jonas out in the barn, is he?"

"Ayuh."

Whit drew his belt tight. "When 'd you last hear of M'lissa?

"I heard three days ago they was all right. Most of your hay in."

"You're sure about that, are you? I mean—about them?"

"'Twas Fred Mason told me."

"Her and the boys?"

"Yes—and the oxen. He didn't mention the dog."

"Oh, she wouldn't come to no harm. She's a good able dog She might miss me, I s'pose—but that would be all."

"Jen would, you mean."

"I ain't got any other."

"I'll go call Jonas." She stepped to the door.

Whit would be glad to see Jonas coming in through the door way. But he wouldn't like telling him that he was going straight on.

Mrs. Moore called, and he heard Jonas answer. She came back inside.

"Jonas," she said, "wanted to wake you last night."

Then Jonas came in. "What a man you be! Eat another man's supper 'n lay by his fire—" He stopped. "Hell, you look even

thinner 'n you did layin' down. You didn't get hurt, did

Jonas kept after him until he found out what had happ-
Finally he asked, "Pain you at all?"
Not now—not a mite."
Works just as good, I suppose, as it ever did?"
Better."
Don't tell me!"
da Moore interrupted. "Jonas, you leave him be! Whit, you
gry to eat, are you?"
Hungry!" Jonas turned on her. "How could he be hungry?
n't done nothin' but sleep on a gallon of stew!" . . . and then
rned back to Whit and just stood there and looked at him
d a slow grin of happiness came over Jonas's face. . . .
Then Jonas said, "Tell you. you come out 'n wash up, 'n she'll
you your breakfast, 'n then you 'n me c'n get on I'm goin'
h you."

Jonas stayed with him a little more than halfway, but then he
pped in the path and said he'd got to turn off—he had to see
well, whose house was near by. That was the reason he'd come,
said. Chances were, he'd get over to Whit's place in the
rning He said he guessed Whit could make it the rest of the
y.

And Whit said he guessed so He said he hoped Jewell
uldn't be too surprised to see Jonas—that is, if Jonas should
d him at home.

"I got an errand," Jonas assured him. "You get along, now
ou got six-seven mile yet. I'll be over t'morrow You tell her
hat, will you?—when you get round to it." And he put his head
own and took his path in the rain.

Whit knew all right how far he had enough strength in him to
tep of it. And he thought he had something left over. It wouldn't do to
make it—and even have something left over.
crawl up to the door on all fours.

He was moving again. The wind didn't

greatly—most of the leaves were still on—and it didn't seem be blowing as hard as it had been at first. It was the wetness hated. His leather shirt and his breeches were soft and gre with water, they were heavy and clung to him. While he k moving, he didn't feel cold. But he knew he'd got to keep m ing; he couldn't stand still.

When he got home he would sit with his face to the fire a then he'd turn round and feel the heat on his back.

He saw little around him: enough of the path as it lay in fro of his feet so that he could pick out his footing; and he saw t familiar, wet woods as, without knowing he did it, he glanc ahead and about him against any surprise. Nothing was trav ing—not so much as a squirrel He went alone in the woods a the rain.

He thought of all pleasant things: his mind wandered amo them, turning to this one and that as though he were alrea home . . . and he picked up young Jonas, and knelt with his arr around Gowan, feeling the good, rugged heft of them. The two were his sons. They were glad he was back, but they'd n orried about him. They would tell him of something that wa ant to them that had happened this morning or yesterday He would go out to the oxen—and they would turn their heads at his coming, and he would hear the soft rush in their nostrils as he reached out his hand. These would be the things of hi homecoming. They were not far ahead. . . .

Her presence was with him. He went forward to her.

Still, anything could have happened in three days and a half he was no more sure now that she was all right than he way back there in Bennington when he had lain sick.

There were three miles to go yet; he knew every step of them.

Bearcamp River, he noted, as he came out on the south bank of it, was perhaps a little bit higher than he might have thought. The wind was much less now, and more out of the north. This storm wouldn't last long.

Crossing the pine plain, he found he couldn't go fast. He was doing all right, though. He could handle it now.

And the rain had stopped altogether before he came to the ge.

Before starting the uphill, he looked again at the sky. He wasn't sure but what it was getting ready to clear . . . and he od and gazed at it longer than there was any real need to because it gave him a chance to gather his strength. He knew he s scraping the corn into a pretty small pile on the bare boards the bin. There was just about a good handful left of it now. ll, he'd seen it empty before, and had lived to fill it again. And guessed he would this time. Once at the top of the ridge, it ould be easy from there. The sky looked much as it had that in the autumn when he'd first seen his place—when he'd en the mountain come out, just the top of it—that had been er a rain, this same time of the year. Well—

—and he tackled the ridge. Stubbornly, slowly, he made his y up Thirty feet at a time—and then stand to rest.

He got to the top of it. But as he stood there, his knees ckled suddenly, and he had to grab hold of a tree and hang , his cheek up against it and his arms halfway round. Anyone ould have laughed who had come on him then But he didn't o down! And when the dizziness passed, he grinned and was roud of himself. He stood back from the tree trunk, but with hat support gone, he had to steady himself by holding the path with eyes . . . but it would be only a moment, and then he could go on He waited the impulse to go forward again. . . .

There came into being over the sodden, brown track, between the near tree trunks, and on down through the woods, the same strange, growing light that he had known once before. He turned his head slowly, to his left hand, to his right, and the light was now growing stronger among the wet, blackened trees. There were no shadows; the light lived in the air.

He couldn't see the mountain from here—and not for his life could he have got up a tree. He stood in the path, facing the way he would go . . . and he knew that the mountain had come out of the clouds. As he had seen it before, it rode now

sky. The top of the mountain lay clean to the sun. Standing he in the path, down in under the trees, he could not see the sun; he'd not seen it, for that matter, that time before. What he had seen was the mountain as it stood forth from the clouds, and had had the sun on it. That was what he saw now—though he looked down the path.

His thin lips were parted in a kind of smile, he swayed just a little, and he went ahead on the path . . . as it turned down through the woods, down the side of the ridge.

The sky pretty well cleared while he was still in the woods—the wind high overhead coming out of the west—and as he came over the wall at the edge of his field, the late afternoon shadows stretched toward him from the shocks. There was smoke from the chimney—but he saw no one about.

Behind and above the house was the mountain. It looked just the same—the blue sky in back of the high granite peak.

He wondered who had got in all his Indian corn. The Masons, he guessed—the stubble was low, and the shocks very neat.

But over his house and his barns, over all of his place he could see, there was the look of September, and that didn't seem right—though every other place he had passed for the last couple of weeks had had that same look to it. Still, he had expected that his own place would look the same as it had when he'd left it . . . back in August, that was.

Halfway through the field, he could stand it no longer. He leaned on his rifle and stood very still—and he called to the house. He gave a sure, even call.

—and after he'd waited, he called again . . . but his voice didn't work so well this time.

She came out of the doorway—stood—and she saw him—and she picked up her skirts, and she came down that hill as though she were a girl running.

—the boys must be all right, or she wouldn't run that way—

He let his rifle fall from his hand—and he went forward to meet her, holding his arms out—

e stood there a time with his face bent to her head—and the drew her head back and looked up at him.

ey had that instant together.

, the two boys came pelting down the hill from the barn—the old dog overtook them, and got to him first Jen didn't to hold it against him that he'd left her behind when he t away—nor did Jonas and Gowan. He'd been right about n—anybody could see there was nothing the matter with n.

step at a time—while young Jonas told them about a great odchuck he'd almost hit with a rock—they went up the hill he house.

Whit missed his rifle as soon as he was inside the house. ere now," he said, "that wan't very bright. I left my rifle n' down in the field."

Melissa said, "Jonas, you go down there 'n get it." And turn- to Whit, "That's all right for him, ain t it?"

"Yes, I don't know why not. You be careful now, Jonas."

Gowan went, too

"I don't know why I done that" Whit took his leather shirt f. "I'm all finished fightin'—or I hope I am—but I c'n hunt all e same. I didn't figure t' throw it away" He started peeling his en shirt off It was dark gray and wet and clung tight to his in. It would be good to be dry

Melissa saw what she'd expected his body was thinner than e'd ever seen. She got him out a new shirt.

"Where'd that come from?" he asked

"I made it for you while you been away I made you two others ut this one's the best You want to rub yourself any?"

"No, I ain't cold. This 'n awful brave shirt. Well—I'll put her on. How'd you know while you was makin' it you wouldn't be wastin' your time?"

"That's why I made it I didn t know. I made some breeches, too."

"You must a kept busy."

"I had plenty of time."

"Short of two months. That ain't a long time."

"Maybe it didn't seem long to you."

"Seemed long enough to me!"

"Whit, you been poorly."

"Well—travelin' 'n all."

"Tell me, Whit, tell me. I got t' know."

"Yes, I d' know but you have. Well, I was kind of poo there a while back."

"A sickness?"

"No. I'm all right. I—well, I got a blow on the head. But sh all mended now."

"I wish you'd tell me 'fore Jonas comes back. That's wh sent him down after your gun."

"Yes Well, all right—" and he told her about it—enou anyhow He left out about Joe.

"This woman took care of you—" Melissa inquired.

Whit sat down on the bench with his back to the fire. "Y know I think maybe I'll try them new breeches—if you got handy"

She brought him his breeches. They were a beautiful pair, an he said so While he was pulling them on, he said, "Well, co you asked about her She was a beauty. Black hair 'n red cheek 'n a little slim, narrer waist. . . . I want t' tell you!"

"You need somethin' t' eat," said Melissa. "You're light in th head." She went to get down his bowl from its place on the shel

Whit found the trousers were too big in the waist.

Melissa said over her shoulder, "How are they? Too big?

"No, not a mite—they won't be—in a week."

He turned round and sat down again, this time facing the fir He guessed now might be the time to tell her about Joe.

"I'd ought to tell you," he said, "about Joe."

There was no sound from Melissa. Whit didn't look round "I mean Joe Felipe," he said . . . and then he went on. "He was there, too—along with Lord and the rest. Well, what I was go

to say about Joe: when I went down—in the fightin', I mean was Joe that stood over me. I guess he kep' 'em off. Someone anyhow, or else they thought I was dead. It was when I t down I got the blow on the head. Later on it was Joe was one lugged me off t' th' side of this brook. I never saw him n. He went back to the fightin' soon 's he heard it start up. d told me about it He said Joe was took quick—he never fered at all. A cannonball done it Lord give me Joe's knife. my way home I pitched it int' th' bed of a stream. It seemed 'ean place for it—there in the sand Though I hope nobody ps on it. You understand, do you? I want you to know: I uldn't be here with you now if it wasn't for Joe. That is all I do for him, is just tell you that"

Whit heard her go across to the doorway, and he knew that she od there for some time looking out. . .

When she came back, she stood at his shoulder—and as she nt down to him, Whit raised up his face, and he saw the tears her eyes and that there were tears on her cheeks. Her lips ere parted and trembling as she bent swiftly to his, and he put is arms up and round the back of her head

When that was over, Melissa straightened up and smiled down at him—and laughed—and went to get down his bowl that was still up on the shelf.

She filled his bowl while he watched her, and she set it down on the table at his regular place

But Whit stayed where he was. He said very suddenly, not looking at her, "I'm glad I went away, though it didn't work out that I kept any Indians off you—they'd never have come. Still, I feel better than if I hadn't gone when I'd figured I'd ought to—even though I was wrong."

"Yes," she said quietly, "I understand."

He stood up and turned round.

And though she could see that he wanted to talk, he looked so thin and tired that she said, "You—you better eat, Wh "

"Yes, in a minute. It is on me to talk."

"I had plenty of time."

"Short of two months. That ain't a long time."

"Maybe it didn't seem long to you."

"Seemed long enough to me!"

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"Well—travelin' 'n all."

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